

# **Employing Creativity: A Comparative Study of Three Federal Job Support Programs in the Arts**

**Amy Gibbs  
Master of Science Candidate  
Arts Administration**

**Drexel University  
Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts &  
Design**

# **THESIS**

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for  
The Master of Science in Arts Administration Drexel University

By

Amy Gibbs, B.A.

\* \* \* \* \*

Drexel University

2012

Approved by

---

Julie Hawkins

Advisor

Graduate Program in

Arts Administration

**Copyright by**

**Amy Gibbs**

**2012**

## **ABSTRACT**

In past periods of economic struggle the US Government has instituted job creation programs that supported, in part, employment for artists and cultural organizations. These programs - the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973, and most recently the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 - all made funds available to support jobs in the arts and cultural sector. This study compares all three programs, examining differences and similarities in their structures, and the subsequent outcomes of each. The paper concludes with recommendations for future policies, which consists of including the arts in the legislation and reporting requirements, and other of points to considering regarding the structure of the overall program, eligibility requirements, limitations on wages and other expenses, and the duration of support.

## **DEDICATION**

Dedicated to Dad, Erin and Eric, Auntie Beth and Uncle Don, and Aunt Marilyn and Uncle

Ed. I could not be more grateful for your unwavering support and love.

I am honored to call you all family.

---

In memory of Letitia Harigel Gibbs and Byron Bennett “Barney” Gibbs

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I must first extend my gratitude to Julie Hawkins. Not only has she been a wonderful advisor on this project she has provided me with incredible support, encouragement, advice, and inspiration over the last several months. None of this would be possible without her guidance. I would also like to thank Neville Vakharia, Andrew Zitcer, Annie Burrridge, Christopher Caltagirone, and the rest of Drexel University's Arts Administration faculty for all their support as well. Additional special thanks go to Jim Undercofler and Cecelia Fitzgibbon. I owe very much to Tim Hedgepeth, who inspired me to pursue a career in arts administration and has served as a wonderful mentor and friend over the years. And finally, I cannot begin to thank all of my family, friends, co-workers, and classmates who suffered through my complaining, worrying, and melt-downs and responded with encouragement and humor. As my father would say, I am fortunate to have everyone mentioned here "in my corner."

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION.....	4
COMPREHENSIVE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACT.....	28
AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT.....	46
FINDINGS.....	58
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	62
ARTS INCLUDED IN LEGISLATION:.....	62
REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:.....	64
POINTS TO CONSIDER.....	66
OVERALL PROGRAM STRUCTURE:.....	66
DEFINING ARTS, ARTISTS, AND ELIGIBILITY:.....	70
LIMITATIONS ON WAGES:.....	74
SUPPORT FOR SUPPLIES:.....	75
DURATION OF SUPPORT:.....	77
CONCLUSION.....	79
TABLE I.....	81
TABLE II.....	82
TABLE III.....	83
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	84
INDEX.....	89

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table I – Requested Allocation for the Federal One Arts Projects for an Eight-month Period Starting June 1938

Table II – Comparative Program Information

Table III – Program Structural Details

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**



WPA: Work Progress Administration

CETA: Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973

ARRA: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

NEA: National Endowment for the Arts

FERA: Federal Emergency Relief Administration of 1933

ERA: Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935

CWA: Civil Works Administration

PWAP: Public Works of Art Project

PWA: Public Works Administration

USES: United States Employment Service

HUAC: House Committee on Un-American Activities

AIR: Artists-in-Residence

FTE: Full-time Equivalency

## **INTRODUCTION**

During the last century the American economy fluctuated greatly. There were periods of prosperity and times of great struggles. In several periods of decline, the federal government created programs to combat high levels of unemployment that were a result of these economic hardships. Three of these programs, the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973, and most recently the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, are unique in the fact that they all made funds available to support jobs in the arts and cultural sector.

America is still in a period of recovery from its most recent recession, which began in 2008. While the unemployment rate is beginning to rise and the economy is improving a level of uncertainty still exists. No matter how much things improve in the coming months and years the economy is always at risk. Should America experience another economic or employment crisis, legislators may find it necessary to enact another job support or stimulus program that includes provisions for the arts industry.

This study examines the Federal One Arts Projects of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the arts related jobs supported by the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), and those that were supported via an allocation of funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The purpose of this study is to examine the structure of federal programs that supported jobs in the arts to help inform future federal job

support programs. The study takes a comparative look at all three programs to examine their differences and similarities in structure and their subsequent outcomes.

Studying previous programs that supported jobs in the arts and cultural industry uncovers the strengths and weaknesses of each program. This study does not attempt to rank one program over another, but simply evaluates differences and similarities among the three. All three programs were structured differently and therefore resulted in different outcomes from which much can be learned. These learnings from the WPA, CETA, and ARRA will be used to provide a list of recommended elements to include and consider in future policies.

This paper addresses two main questions in order to generate recommendations for future policies: what can be learned from these past programs to inform future policy, potentially maximizing the number of jobs in the arts supported; and, what are the most important elements to consider when constructing policy? The study looks at the way each program was structured, as well as how it was funded, how it provided support for workers, and the kinds of regulations governing its implementation. In an effort to evaluate the outcomes of each program this study also takes into consideration the number of jobs in the arts that were supported by each program and the portion of each program's overall budget dedicated to arts related activities.

The majority of the data and information for this study comes from existing research and literature on each of the three programs, as well as datasets containing information on the number of jobs supported and budget levels. The legislation for each program was also studied in order to provide details that were not included elsewhere.

While volumes have been written on the WPA, a significant amount exists on CETA, and some literature is beginning to emerge on ARRA. Minimal research has been conducted comparing WPA and CETA to each other, but the majority of what exists was created in the early days of CETA and focuses on a desire to bring back a program structured similarly to the WPA (Barnes 1975; Dubin 1987). In what has been written on ARRA, there appears to be a similar interest in resurrecting the WPA, but there is little mention of CETA (Grunwald 2012; Williams 2009). Research on these programs did not uncover any studies that included all three. This study may be one of the first, or among the few, that examines the differences and similarities in the structures and outcomes of the WPA, CETA, and ARRA.

Much of the research that exists on the arts portions WPA and CETA focuses on artistic gains rather than the number of jobs created. The unemployment level tends to be one of the most talked about issues in today's news; it is very rare for concern to be presented on the type of work people are involved in. This study fills this void by primarily focusing on the relief aspect of these programs rather than the artistry. This is not to say that the artistic achievements are not important, it is just not the most important message for the current economic and political climate.

This study first provides detailed information on the background, structure, and outcomes of each of the three programs. The main differences and similarities are then discussed and evaluated. Finally, lists of recommended elements to be included in future policies and other points that would need to be considered before implementing legislation are presented.

## **WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION**

The United States' first major foray into federally funding the arts came during the Great Depression. President Roosevelt's top priority during his first administration was to combat massive unemployment. As part of the New Deal, the Federal One Arts Projects was created under the auspice of the Works Progress Administration to provide employment for out-of-work artists. The Federal One Arts Projects contained five separate discipline-specific sub-projects: Federal Theatre Project, Art Project, Music Project, Writers Project, and the Historical Records Survey. Federal One was established through Executive Order Number 7034 and funding was provided by The Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 (ERA). The intention was to put people back to work doing the work that they were trained to do, not necessarily to "subsidize creativity" (Zeigler 1994).

The Federal One projects were successful in achieving their goal of providing work for many artists and others in the cultural field from 1935 to 1939, at which time the Emergency Relief Act of 1939 called for the end of federal support to Federal One and the immediate dissolution of the Federal Theatre Project due to accusations of Communist connections and propaganda. Although federal funds for the four remaining Art Projects were cut, they remained in existence in several states until 1943, creating what some consider to be "a whole generation of creative people sustained by the WPA" (Zeigler 1994).

The economic boom of the 1920s was predicted by many to continue on into the new decade, but the great successes of the stock market lay the groundwork for the collapse, the bull market allowed for scam artists to go undetected and man were

focused on “get rich quick schemes” (Quinn 2008). But then October 4, 1929, “Black Thursday,” took America by surprise. Within a matter of months the economy was flipped upside-down. Shortly after the stock market crashed the banks closed; not long after that employers were laying off workers left and right. For the three years following Black Thursday, companies laid off an average of 20,000 employees every weekday (Meltzer 1967). In many cities the unemployment rate was as high as 30 or 50% (Meltzer 1967). Hundreds of thousands of businesses failed. By 1931 over 7 million people were out of work, and that number was continuing to grow (Meltzer 1967).

Following the crash of the stock-market in 1929 and the subsequent depression, there was a great deal of debate in Washington on how to aid the growing number of desperate people. By 1931, many, including President Hoover, insisted that it was not the government’s responsibility to provide relief but private charities were capable of solving the problem. Hoover once quoted President Cleveland stating that, “though people support the government, the government should not support the people” (Quinn 2008). Hoover approved of the idea of providing government loans, which he saw as promoting self-help, but did not support the idea of direct aid as he felt it would lead to an “abyss of reliance in the future upon government charity” (Quinn 2008).

By the time of the presidential election in 1932 the desperation had hit a fever pitch and America seemed almost on the brink of revolution. All across the country starving people were rioting in grocery stores and stealing food just so their families could survive. Along the campaign trail President Hoover found himself frequently greeted by angry mobs. Many felt as though President Hoover was out of touch. Hoover’s opponent, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, knew that in order to become President,

and be successful, he needed to devise a plan to rescue America from the worst depression in history. He was told that if he succeeded, he would be the greatest President and if he failed he would be the worst, to which he replied, "If I fail... I shall be the last one" (Quinn 2008). As the election drew near and the opposition to Hoover increased, Roosevelt found himself carrying all but six states (Quinn 2008).

Franklin Roosevelt was elected the 32nd President of the United States on November 8, 1932. Shortly before his inauguration on March 4, 1933 the United States sank into the deepest lows of the Depression after a run on the banks caused the banking system to collapse practically overnight (Meltzer 1976). Knowing that the country was in dire straits, Roosevelt acted quickly to try and turn the economy around. Only a few months after he was elected, Roosevelt urged Congress to repeal Prohibition, place regulations on Wall Street, and build in new protections for bank depositors. Additionally, he wanted to see a new federal system enacted that would bolster relief efforts through the local level; this resulted in the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) (Quinn 2008). All of these bills were signed into law within the first one-hundred days of Roosevelt's presidency.

FERA was given an initial allocation of \$500 million and was the first federal program of its kind: a grant-in-aid program that provided states with grants to provide relief for those out of work (McDonald 1969). At its core, FERA had three main programs: direct relief, work relief, and special programs. However, one of the main focuses of the program was to replace as much direct relief with work relief as possible by creating diverse employment opportunities. The work relief projects were housed

under the Civil Works Administration (CWA), an off-shoot of FERA, which also provided relief in the form of food and living allowances (Quinn 2008).

In an attempt to diversify projects, “FERA directly encouraged three types of projects: federal projects, women’s projects, and white-collar projects. None of these programs had progressed far before the inception of the CWA, but their earlier beginning presaged more substantial development later” (McDonald 1969: 38). In the beginning, the white-collar projects were rejected by many, mainly because of their high costs. These projects by nature were smaller and hired fewer people than other projects that required manual labor. As a result, these smaller projects also required more supervisory level employees that were more expensive than the average worker. Many favored manual labor projects because their work resulted in tangible products, which was not always the case with the white-collar workers. Some even felt that the “non-material” nature of white-collar workers’ efforts were merely a luxury (McDonald 1969). Despite the objections of some, the inclusion of the white-collar projects were successful in providing work for those in need and laid the ground work for FERA and the CWA for the first time to truly create and support jobs for arts and cultural workers.

Prior to CWA, relief projects that were developed specifically for employing artists, musicians, actors, dancers, or writers were extremely rare and were locally administered and funded (McDonald 1969). In December 1933, the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) was established; this was the first major federal program to support artists. The PWAP provided the Treasury Department’s Procurement Division with a grant from the CWA to employ artists and craftsmen with the purpose of decorating and embellishing public buildings. The goal was to employ 3,300 men and



women at an estimated cost of just over \$1 million. Criticisms towards PWAP started early on, the majority of which were focused on the fact that talent and ability as an artist was the main criteria for employment rather than need. The federal government was seen as subsidizing wealthy artists rather than providing aid to hungry ones. Regardless of the criticisms, PWAP set a precedent for federal support of artists. By the time that PWAP ended in 1935, it had provided jobs for nearly 3,750 people who created 15,663 works of art “ranging from sculpture, murals, oils and mosaics to craft articles, Navajo blankets, portraits, and stage sets” (McDonald 1969). The total cost for the project was \$1.3 million, 90% of which went to artists’ wages.

Only a year and half after Roosevelt took up residence in the White House, the economy was beginning to improve. Unemployment had decreased by over two million and the national income had increased by nearly 25%, or \$9 billion. There was a slate of new legislation on its way that would provide security for homeowners, farmers and senior citizen as well as implement new labor standards and enforce new oversight for financial institutions (Quinn 2008). As a result, FERA is considered to be among the most important pieces of legislation that was enacted during this time (Quinn 2008).

However, by 1935, eight years into the Depression, eight million Americans were still without jobs (Meltzer 1976). At the urging of Harry Hopkins, the Director of FERA and one of Roosevelt’s closest advisors, it was decided that the federal government should focus its attention on work relief. As a result, the Work Progress Administration (WPA) replaced FERA in April, 1935 through Executive Order Number 7034. In doing so, the grant-in-aid system of FERA was abandoned and the WPA was given the authority to control all operations from the bottom up. In fact, every person

that was employed by the WPA became an employee of the federal government. This new \$5 billion program acted “like a separate economic system that ran parallel to the regular one” (Meltzer 1976). Essentially, if a worker was unable to find employment in the private economy the WPA was open to them. The WPA hired everyone from ditch diggers to lawyers and carpenters to accountants (Meltzer 1976).

The WPA was designed to allocate money promptly and according to need. It prioritized wages over large capital costs. Larger capital projects, such as building tunnels and dams, were managed by the Public Works Administration (PWA). The WPA, on the other hand, took on smaller, more “nimble” projects (Quinn 2008). The primary goal of the WPA was to put people back to work, doing jobs that they were trained to do, in order to spread wealth and opportunity more broadly than other relief programs had in the past. At the time, the WPA was the “most expensive program ever launched by any government anywhere in the world” (Quinn 2008). No longer was the focus to just keep people alive, but rather to have them do meaningful work while earning a living.

As mentioned before, the PWAP was dissolved along with FERA in 1935 but it had established a precedent for work relief programs focused on the arts. It was quickly realized that with the volume of artists of all genres and disciplines out of work a program focused on just visual artists, as PWAP had, could not exist without similar programs for other artists including musicians, dancers, actors, and writers (McDonald 1969). In 1935, just as the government was transitioning out of FERA and into the WPA, approximately 11% of the 4,986,000 workers on federal, state, or local relief rolls belonged to the white-collar class. “Of the more than half-million white collar workers on relief, 82,100, or approximately 15% belonged to the professional and technical

groups... Of those employed in the arts, actors numbered 3,709; artists, sculptors, and teachers of art, 2,900; and musicians and teachers of music, 14,922. This last class comprised almost one-fifth of the professional and technical workers on relief" (McDonald 1969).

In August of 1935, only a few months after WPA was established, Harry Hopkins announced "the most daring of all WPA gambits:" Federal Project Number One (Federal One) (Quinn 2008). This newly established arts-centric, white-collar program of the WPA was developed with four discipline specific sub-projects: The Federal Art Project, The Federal Music Project, The Federal Theatre Project, and The Federal Writers Project. A fifth project, the Historical Records Survey grew out of the Writers Project. Federal One was the first of only six white-collar programs of the WPA that came to fruition (McDonald 1969).

One of the biggest problems the WPA faced was developing an effective structure for the arts projects. Harry Hopkins served as the director of the WPA, while Jacob Baker was the chief of the WPA's White-Collar Division, under which Federal One was housed. Baker officially announced the Federal One projects in August of 1935. However, Federal One was not formally approved by President Roosevelt until September, at which time Hopkins announced that this project would replace all existing state and local arts projects by transferring them to the Federal Government. There was no precedent for this type sudden change from local to federal sponsorship of projects and therefore the new policies and procedures were created hastily (McDonald 1969).

Hopkins and Baker assigned each of the individual projects a director at the federal level to oversee operations: Holger Cahill for the Art Project, Nicoli Sokoloff for the Music Project, Hallie Flanagan for the Theatre Project, and Henry Alsberg for the

Writers Project, who were given the collective nickname of “The Big Four” (Meltzer 1976). Together, Hopkins, Baker, and The Big Four spent the first few months planning and preparing each of the four initial projects of Federal One. They all had the shared hope that Federal One could “ultimately employ between twenty and thirty thousand” out-of-work artist, musicians, actors and writers (Quinn 2008). Within just a few short months, the WPA “had more than 38,000 [artists] engaged in programs designed for [their] needs and capacities. Out of the \$5 billion Congress allotted for emergency relief, \$27 million was funneled” into the projects of Federal One (Meltzer 1976).

The structure of Federal One was rather complex and “based the principle of decentralization by specialty” (McDonald 1969). Underneath the federal directors for each discipline specific project there were three additional hierarchical levels: regional, state, and district. The federal directors were given the authority to appoint the directors for the regional and state levels and the district supervisors, these appointees were considered to be delegated representatives of the federal directors (McDonald 1969). As with the rest of the WPA, the officers at all four levels were assisted by as staff. The only difference in this structure was in the Writers Project, which omitted the position of the regional director, making it more similar to the structure of the rest of the WPA. The Writers Project replaced the regional director with field representatives who were directly “attached” to the federal office (McDonald 1969). The hope was that this structure would, “reverse the established trend – the centralization of artists in a few metropolitan centers. The goal was to make arts the possession of people everywhere” (Meltzer 1976).

District supervisors for each of the five Federal One Projects were responsible for the management of individual projects in their locality, referred to as “project units,”

and the hiring of all personnel (McDonald 1969). Employment in a project unit involved a referral process with the local employment office of the United States Employment Service (USES) and the district supervisor for the Project. All those seeking relief from the WPA were required to register with the USES (McDonald 1969). Traditionally, the USES was responsible for interviewing, registering and classifying all certified persons. Registration with the USES was required in order to provide a list of names for referrals to private employers and the PWA, “both of which enjoyed priority over the WPA” (McDonald 1969). Should a relief worker employed by the WPA be requested by a private employer or the PWA it was mandatory that he or she quit their position with the WPA and accept the other offer.

Each person on the USES registry was given one of four classifications: professional or technical, skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled. Classifications were not determined by any tests or examinations but through a series of forms completed by the worker and personal interviews with USES staff regarding education and prior experiences. However, the classification of workers essentially rested on their personal testimony of their skills and abilities. One of the main criticisms of this, especially in regards to Federal One and other white-collar or professional programs, was that it was far too easy for someone to lie about his or her qualifications or talents and USES staff were frequently misled (McDonald 1969). These levels and methods of classification were much more helpful for the manual labor projects but proved to be relatively “useless” for the professional programs (McDonald 1969).

After conferring with the local USES office, a Federal One district supervisor would request to interview all those registrants who appeared to have the necessary skills (McDonald 1969). These individuals would then either be interviewed by the

district supervisor directly, or a committee that had been designated in his or her stead, to measure the candidates on their talents and merits. The USES was responsible for the initial assignment of a worker, but Federal One district supervisors were also granted the authority to assign a salary classification to potential workers: professional, skilled, intermediate, or unskilled.

The ability to reassign and reclassify workers benefited Federal One more than it did other projects. Federal One officials had two sources to draw talented workers from. First, they could request workers from the USES relief registries by the needed skill: pianists, actors, sculptors, etcetera. Often times artists would not be classified as such with the USES because at the time of their registration there were no open positions for them where they were located. This lowered the frequency in which a worker might be referred to Federal One by the USES. Officials also had the ability to filter through the WPA labor management files to find workers that were already assigned to a job classification who fit the desired criteria and had the talents necessary to employ them in Federal One. Additionally, any workers that were transferred from a state's ERA program to the WPA were considered to be already assigned to the WPA and were also eligible for reassignment or reclassification under the WPA. This meant that the WPA could have workers transferred from a state's ERA art program or project to a Federal One project in that state; this could happen at an individual level or in mass for an entire existing ERA project. Surprisingly, even with all of the bureaucracy involved, large mass transfers of an ERA project to a WPA project were often times the easiest way for Federal One officials to find the talented laborers they desired (McDonald 1969).

Qualifications for placement on the relief rolls varied from locality to locality, and were much more difficult in some areas than in others. Researcher and author

Milton Meltzer, who worked as a writer for the Federal Theatre Project, recounts his struggles with qualifying and staying on the USES roster in New York City:

The Home Relief Bureau put applicants through a stiff investigation. Did I have any property – a home, car, oil well, gold mine, shoe store, stocks, bonds? Did anyone in my family have property? Did I have any money stashed in my mattress or in a savings account? Did I have insurance that could be cashed in? The relief investigator asked a million questions and took my word for nothing. He checked up on all my answers. Once I was put on relief rolls, the probing didn't stop. Investigators could drop into my dingy room without notice and look in the icebox or the cupboard to see if I had any extra food stored away. The closet was ransacked to see if there was more clothing in it than my relief payment could afford. My neighbors were drawn into the investigation. Did my coming and goings indicate that I might have a secret job? Was I living too high off the hog for a reliefer? Was a brother or mother in sight who might be able to support me? (Meltzer 1976).

Since providing work for those in need was the primary concern of the WPA, and not the actual work that they performed, it was not always easy to disqualify someone for a particular position in Federal One because the worker essentially had the freedom to claim that the project be designed in a way to suit him or her (McDonald 1969). As mentioned earlier, classification generally depended on what the worker told the USES staff. Therefore, someone could claim to be a cello player when in reality they had had only one year of lessons as a child (McDonald 1969). To the best of their ability, Federal One officials tried to emphasize projects over project workers and did their best

to “weed out” those who were less talented or skilled. Generally, this was done through a process of reassignment to another non-arts related WPA project or on rare occasion dismissal from the WPA altogether (McDonald 1969).

Once a district supervisor was able to determine the qualifications of the eligible workers and the “needs and desires of the [local] community” it was then his or her responsibility to decide on the exact nature of the project units (McDonald 1969). More often than not, the projects were developed around the talent that was available rather than seeking out talent to fulfill the needs of a particular project or production.

One of the biggest internal struggles of the WPA was the need to balance the artistic needs of a project unit with the relief needs of individuals. Federal One administrators were often faced with the question of whether or not they should hire someone who was more financially stable but a more talented artist versus someone who was in need of more assistance but was less skilled. As a result, Federal One was given a special dispensation to employ up to 10% of non-relief workers who were “hired for artistic rather than relief considerations” to fill skilled and supervisory positions should adequate talent not be found on the local relief rolls (Levy 1997). After discovering that in some localities the relief rolls were too small to engage in any legitimate arts projects, the federal directors and their regional counterparts petitioned for an exemption from the 10% rule. One was granted by Administrative Order No. 35 that allowed for the Theatre, Art, Music and Writing Projects a maximum of 25% of employees on a project to be non-relief workers. However, the national average of non-relief personnel on Federal One remained well below 10% for the duration of the program (McDonald 1969).



Most all WPA workers, artists included, were required to follow the same strict rules that did not always work well for the creative process. Many artists found themselves in a position where they had to clock-in and out for the time that they worked on a painting or sculpture for a set time period, generally from 9:00am to 5:00pm. These artists were also often required to work in a designated space with supervision to account for their activities. On average, each worker was required to put in ninety hours of work each month. The amount of work created by the artist and the timeframe in which he or she completed it was also subject to regulation: “three weeks was the allotted time for a watercolor or gouache, and, depending on the size, four to six weeks for an oil” (Meltzer 1976). However, it was very rare that the subject or style of these works of art be dictated to the artists; they were, at least, granted that freedom. These requirements were by no means outrageous for most other types of workers, but many artists found it difficult to adapt their methods and processes to these traditional work schedules that were designed for more typical WPA programs.

The next step in the process was for the district supervisor to seek approval for his or her chosen project units from the State Director. From there it was then sent to either the Regional Director or the Federal Director for final approval. It was at this point that an allocation of funds was made by the WPA Administration (outside of and above the Federal Director of the Project) and given to the District for each of the project units along with stipulations on how it could be spent. The WPA Administration also reserved the power to discontinue any project unit at any time, and the channels below had very little authority to object.

Approved and operational project units were under the supervision of the District Supervisors who then reported “first to the field representatives and, through

them, to the federal directors” (McDonald 1969). Essentially, outside of the approval process the State and Regional Directors had very little authority over a project unit and the majority of the authority resided in the District Supervisor, the Federal Director, or the WPA Administrators.

The funding for, and essentially the existence of, the WPA was dependent upon congressional allocations, as is every other federal agency. Ultimately, “Congress was responsible for the inception, continuance, and final liquidation of the program” (McDonald 1976). However, the WPA was considerably different than most other federal agencies in that it was formed out of a combination of executive order and a series of appropriation acts rather than one particular piece of legislation. Instead, considerations for the WPA’s funding were presented to and decided upon by the appropriations committees of both the House and the Senate. The Federal Directors all of the WPA projects, not just those related to the arts, requested their funding directly from the President. For each allocation to the WPA the President would then make an initial determination of the amount needed and send his recommendation to Congress. The appropriations committee then made the decision on whether or not the appropriation would be granted, and these decisions were always final. Never did Congress increase or decrease a proposed appropriation to the WPA. During the course of the WPA, 97.6% of the total amount of money recommended by the President was granted (McDonald 1969).

Federal One was sponsored solely by the WPA, and therefore allocations for its funding followed suit. President Roosevelt himself, with support from various advisors, requested the appropriations for the WPA and from that amount the allocation that Federal One would receive. Federal One’s allocation was made “*en bloc*, broken down

only with reference to constituent projects – not by states and designed to cover a variable period of time” ranging from three to six months, occasionally less (McDonald 1969). Not receiving regular allocations on an annual or semi-annual basis made Federal One vulnerable; this meant that the program could easily be cut at any time at the discretion of the President. Many of the budget problems that Federal One faced may have also been a result of this unstructured, periodic allocation process. It was difficult for directors and officials to plan too far into the future because they were never sure how much funding they would receive in the next allocation and how long it would last.

All projects of the WPA were required to have an official governmental sponsor at either the federal, state, or local level that was an authorized government agency. These sponsors were intended to provide a plan for those employed through the program and how to employ those on the relief rolls; several WPA projects had additional co-sponsors that often provided supervision to the project but not any additional monetary support. The WPA served as the official sponsor of Federal One, mainly because at the time there was no other federal agency qualified to oversee an arts program. Since Federal One lacked other sponsorship, the WPA was responsible for covering all relief wages and all other supplemental and non-labor expenses that might have otherwise been covered by a sponsor (McDonald 1969). Non-labor costs tended to be small a concern with most of the WPA projects, however these were considerably higher for the white-collar projects, and more specifically Federal One. Without providing support for non-labor expenses it would have been difficult to employ artists to do the work they were trained to do, the impetus behind Federal One. In order to allow for non-governmental agencies including “public or quasi-public agency, or a private non-profit organization” to provide support for the Federal One projects, which

many felt was important, the idea of “co-operating sponsors” was developed (McDonald 1969).

These local co-operating sponsors worked with the District Supervisors of the Art, Music, Theatre and Writing programs in order to create appropriate projects “for which proper talent is available from the relief rolls” and were also encouraged to contribute to the project financially (McDonald 1969). While the WPA was required to pay wages for all certified employees, it was hoped that these co-operating sponsors would be able to defray the costs for other things such as travel and space rental as well as covering some of the wages for non-certified employees (McDonald 1969).

As beneficial as the co-operating sponsorships were in some instances, they were also very suspicious to the Administration. There was concern that co-operating sponsors would attempt to try and gain some control over the projects as a form of reciprocity for their assistance. This is one of the biggest contributing factors as to why co-operating sponsorships were not required for the Federal One projects; “local support was welcome only if it could be divorced from local responsibility” (McDonald 1969).

In an interesting interpretation of co-operating sponsorship, the admission funds received by the Music and Theatre projects were considered to be sponsors’ contributions. This meant that the audience of a concert or play could be considered a co-operating sponsor, even though it did not fully fit the definition as a “public or quasi-public agency, or a private non-profit organization (McDonald 1969). There was no contractual relationship between a production and its audience. However, the revenue received from admissions was used by the project to cover overhead expenses such as

materials, supplies, and non-certified personnel wages, in much the same way as a more traditional co-operating sponsors' contribution. Admission funds were treated in this way to prevent the money from flowing into the miscellaneous receipts of the Treasury so that the Music and Theatre projects could retain jurisdiction over the funds (McDonald 1969).

During the time in which the Federal One projects were in operation, the Theatre Project and the Music Project brought in a combined total of over \$2.6 million in revenue, 80% of which came from the Theatre Project (McDonald 1969). However, the Theatre and Music project received a fair amount of pushback from within the arts industry over the fact that they could charge admission for their performances. By law these admission prices were to be kept very low, normally around thirty cents, and many others were free. This free and low-cost admission helped the WPA meet another goal of the Federal One by making art more accessible. The problem was that non-government sponsored theatre and musical organizations could not compete with these low prices and saw the Arts Projects as an undue burden on them during uncertain times. In this pre-NEA era, Federal support of certain arts organizations appeared to some more as "seed money" rather than relief for the unemployed (Levy 1997).

While it was hoped that the Federal One projects could become self-supporting from the admission revenue alone they never came close, and were not even able to cover all of the non-labor or relief expenses. However, they were able to cover a little less than 5% of all the Theatre Project's total expenses and 1% of the Music Project's (McDonald 1969). Both projects needed to bring on additional personnel to handle all of the cash and other clerical duties to account for the expenditures. For both the Theatre and Music Projects the number of business managers, cashiers and box office treasurers

numbered around 400 to 500 and their salaries were quite possibly equal to the \$2.6 million in revenue that they were hired to manage (McDonald 1969).

Almost all of the WPA's expenses went towards wages for the employees. One of the primary goals of the WPA was to provide a livable wage for the millions of unemployed workers of varying skill levels. Budgets and allocations for various WPA project units were based upon the "man-month" cost, or the average monthly salary for someone employed on a particular project. The wage structure was based upon three main criteria: geographical area, individual skill, and urbanization of county. The whole country was divided into four regions, in each of which wages were established in accordance with the cost and standard of living (McDonald 1969). As discussed before there were essentially four levels of classification for employees: professional and technical; skilled; semi-skilled; and unskilled. A standard rate of pay was set for each of these four classes in accordance with the geographic range.

While the average man-month cost for Federal One varied from year to year, location to location, and project to project, it tended to have the highest figures when compared to other WPA projects, including other white-collar projects. For Fiscal year 1937, the average man-month cost for all of Federal One was \$99.80, whereas the average man-month cost for rest of the WPA that year was \$59. Federal One was often criticized for the large disparity in its man-month costs compared to other projects. The main cause for the difference was due to the standardized rate of pay and the skill level of the employees on Federal One. In April, 1938, 8.6% of all Federal One workers were supervisory (and therefore often times not coming from the relief rolls); 67.3% were classified as professional/technical; 18.7% were skilled and/or semi-skilled; and only the

remaining 5.4% were considered to be unskilled (McDonald 1969). The majority of the workers on the other WPA projects fell into the semi- and unskilled categories and were therefore far less expensive. Additionally, many of the Federal One projects were concentrated in large metropolitan areas, which then also mandated higher wages (McDonald 1969). Table I examines the projected employment figures, and man-years as part of the requested allocation for Federal One made in July of 1938 for an eight month period.

By the time that the WPA ended in 1942, it is estimated that it provided work and income for nearly 3 million people at a total cost of \$11 billion (Grabell 2012). When compared to the overall total employment figures for all of the WPA projects, the arts projects of Federal One seem small. Due to the way in which employment records were kept and nature of the work performed by employees of Federal One it is difficult to pinpoint an exact number for the total number of people employed by the various Arts Projects. However, there are some figures available that look at a specific period of time to project estimates. According to researcher William McDonald, at its height the Federal One Arts Projects employed 2% of the total of WPA employees and towards the end of Federal One in 1939, there were as many as 2.6 million people working for the WPA. (McDonald 1969). This means that there were possibly as many as 52,000 people working on Federal One in May, 1939 (Quinn 2008). If that figure is used as an estimate for the entire four years of Federal One, possibly as many as 200,000 artists were employed by the federal government.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The 200,000 is based upon calculating out 2% of 2.6 million to get 52,000 for one year's time of Federal One Employees. That 52,000 was multiplied by 4 to come to the 200,000.

Another way to estimate the total number of workers on Federal One is based upon an allocation request for an eight month period that was made in July of 1938, which is detailed in Table I. Federal One had a projected total employment of 39,600. If that figure was extrapolated out to a full year, at an estimated 4,950 total employees per month, it would come to about 59,400 workers. At that rate, as many as 237,000 artists were employed by the federal government as part of Federal One for the four years it was in existence (McDonald 1969).<sup>2</sup> Using these two different methods of estimation, Federal One Supported somewhere between 200,000 and 237,000 workers over a span of four years.

It is important to note that in addition to the success of the WPA in regards to providing relief, there were artistic achievements that are a direct result of the program. Millions of new works ranging from musical scores, to paintings, to volumes of poetry were created. Additionally, countless Americans were granted the opportunity to participate in the arts, who may have not had the chance otherwise. Despite the bureaucracy that surrounded the Federal One arts projects, “few of the artists who worked on the WPA recall any bounds set to their artistic freedom” (Meltzer 1976). The various performing arts programs also performed in rural areas to expose new audiences to theatre, dance and live symphonic music; painters and sculptors created public works in many cities and towns throughout the United States to be enjoyed by all.

There are several lasting project units of the Federal Music Project that are still providing jobs and producing music today. In 1933, there were less than a dozen

---

<sup>2</sup> The 237,000 estimate is based on the projections included in Table I for an eight month period of 39,600. That was divided by 8 to come up with the monthly estimate, which was then multiplied by 12 to result in an annual employment level estimate of 59,400. This figure was then multiplied by 4 to come to a total figure of 237,000.



recognized symphony orchestras in the United States but during the course of the WPA thirty-four more were added (Meltzer 1976). Many of these still exist including the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Utah Symphony, and the Oklahoma City Symphony Orchestra (Zeigler 1994). The Federal Music Project brought symphonic music to many cities where it had not existed before and where no one had known there was a sustainable desire for it. Additionally, one of the other lasting effects of the Project was the new works that came out of it. Aaron Copland and Virgil Thomas were among some of the composers that worked for the Federal Music Project. The WPA also provided instructions for music teachers that gave them new techniques for teaching classes with several students rather than individual instruction, which up until this time was the norm. This expansion of education broadened the impact of the WPA (McDonald 1969).

The Federal Art Project gave the American public thousands of new works of art: “the official record shows, there was over 100,000 easel paintings in oil, watercolor, tempera, and pastel; nearly 18,000 pieces of sculpture; about 2,500 murals; and some 250,000 prints of over 11,000 original designs in the graphic media” (Meltzer 1976). One of the most notable achievements of the Art Project was the Index of American Design, the brainchild of Cahill. The purpose of the Index was to record American decorative, folk, and practical artistic design. It was intended to record material of “historical significance” that had not been previously studied and was at risk of being lost to form “the basis of an organic development of American design,” and to make these records “accessible to artists, designers, manufacturers, museums, libraries, and art schools” (Meltzer 1976). The Index of American Design on its own provided jobs for 500 people in 35 different states at its peak (Meltzer 1976).

The achievements of Federal One also touched the technical aspects of the arts and several technological advancements were made. For example, electronic lighting boards with dimmer controls and backstage projections were two developments that came out of the Federal Theatre Project and revolutionized the way in which theatre and other live art forms are presented (Levy 1997; Mankin 1995). The ingenuity of several artists engaged in the Federal Arts Project produced new materials and methods such as, “two synthetic resins, alkyd and acrylic; a noncrackable sizing for canvas; a technique for painting directly on plastered walls by mixing a special glue with paint; and the petrochrome mural” (Meltzer 1976). During this same period, “improvements were made in color lithography and block printing... [and] the silk-screen process [was developed] into a fine arts medium” (Meltzer 1976). In fact, within a year of the first experiments, a fifth of all the Arts Project’s prints were created using the silk-screening process (Meltzer 1976).

All of these successes were not enough to preserve Federal One indefinitely. Two programs were the source of the majority of the criticisms against the WPA: the Federal Writers Project and the Federal Theatre. These two were also directly involved in the dissolution of the Arts Projects. Unlike most others, the Writers Project’s relief rolls were more open to non-artistic workers; essentially, any white-collar worker who could not find employment elsewhere within the WPA could be placed into the Writers Project. Unfortunately, this led to charges of abuse and fraud, especially when it was discovered that the Project had hired several individuals who had been convicted for check forgery. These counterfeiters claimed they had indeed “previously gained livelihood from writing fiction” (Levy 1997).

Additionally, charges of Communist ideology ran rampant in both the Federal Writers and Theatre Projects. The political and social commentary in a number of the writings and plays produced by these two projects led to accusations “of propagandizing Communist ideology, the Democratic Party’s agenda, and, specifically, Roosevelt’s New Deal” (Cooper 2004). During this same time, fear was mounting in the American public, and more importantly in the political arena, towards the threat of Communism. The Federal Government felt that in no way should it be supporting, much less funding, anything that appeared to promote Communistic ideals. Only a few short years after the Arts Projects were established, Congressman Martin Dies of Texas formed the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) in 1938 for the purpose of investigating charges of Communist infiltration.

Just weeks after the formation of HUAC, it honed in on the Federal Writers and Theatre Projects. Out of the hundreds of plays produced by the Theatre Project, eighty-one or nearly 10%, were criticized by the Committee and Congressional witnesses. HUAC claimed to have “startling evidence that Federal Theatre was operating as a branch to the Communist party” (Buttitta & Witham 1982). After months of testimony, the allegations against the two programs shifted to their use of federal funds. Hallie Flanagan, the National Director of the Federal Theatre Project, immediately produced documentation that the Project had begun charging admission for most plays in 1936 to help subsidize production costs and that tax-payer dollars were only being spent on relief wages. She was also forced to personally refute allegations of Communist connections and propaganda, but to no avail. Harry Hopkins and other high level officers within the WPA came to Flanagan’s defense and tried to protect the Federal One Arts Projects. Unfortunately, Representative Clifton Woodrum, chair of the House

Appropriations Committee, and his supporters in the House “moved swiftly” to introduce a bill that would cut off funding for the Federal Theatre Project (Buttitta & Witham 1982).

In May of 1939, Colonel Francis Harrington, who had recently been appointed to replace Hopkins as Director of the WPA, came before the House Appropriations Committee with a new plan for the Federal One Arts Projects. He presented the committee with three major changes for the Program that he felt would “remedy certain defects” which included the idea of terminating the Federal One projects as federally sponsored endeavors , and securing local sponsorship for as many projects as possible (McDonald 1969).

The Emergency Relief Act of 1939 called for the immediate abolishment of the Federal Theatre Project and gave only “one month to ‘liquidate’ property and non-certified personnel and three months to ‘liquidate’ certified personnel” (McDonald 1969). It also put an end to federal support of the other four WPA sponsored Federal One Arts Projects by converting them into solely state projects. When the bill was brought before President Roosevelt “he called [it] discriminatory legislation to which he was personally opposed, but he signed” (Buttitta & Witham 1982).

## **COMPREHENSIVE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACT**

More than thirty years after the cancelation of the Federal One Arts Projects of the WPA, President Nixon signed into law the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) in December, 1973. This new program provided job training and employment opportunities for those who were unemployed and underemployed. Unlike the WPA, CETA did not have a distinct program or objective to support out-of-work artists and arts administrators. However, there were a large number of unemployed artists who did qualify for employment through the program. CETA was intended to decentralize existing federally funded job support programs by giving power to state and local governments and agencies. The program lasted in this capacity until it was replaced by the Job Training Partnership Act in 1982.

The late 1960s and early 1970s brought rapid changes to the labor market. As the Baby Boomer generation was entering into the labor market it jumped by 16 million in about seven years, rising from more than 80 million in January, 1969 to 96 million in November, 1976. Alongside the spike in the labor force, employment shot up from 77 million workers in December, 1968 to 88 million in December, 1976 (Department of Labor 1977). However, the unemployment levels were increasing along with the rise in employment and the labor force; between December 1968 and December 1976 unemployment rose from a wartime low of 3.3% to 7.9% (Department of Labor 1977). To make matters worse, between 1969 and 1974 the rate of inflation more than doubled, jumping from 5.4% to 11% (Department of Labor 1977). When CETA was

implemented in December of 1973 the unemployment level was relatively low hovering between 3 and 5% through the first half of 1974 (Dubin 1987; Department of Labor 1975). As a result, the initial emphasis was on providing opportunities for those who faced long-term under- or unemployment rather than on those who more recently found themselves out of work. The major focus of the program was to “improve the employability of relatively untrained workers,” with an emphasis on disadvantaged populations, by both creating new job prospects and provide job training assistance (Dubin 1987).

Soon after CETA went into effect, the economy took a rapid turn for the worse and unemployment quickly rose. By the end of 1974, unemployment hit 6.6% and skyrocketed for the next several months. By the second quarter of 1975, unemployment stood at about 9%, the highest it had been since the Great Depression (Department of Labor 1975). As the economy deteriorated, the goal of CETA was forced to change to provide support not only to those who were chronically under- and unemployed but to also provide assistance for those who recently lost their jobs. The idea was to create a counter-cyclical public service employment program, which would create temporary jobs in the public sector to “help the system regain a collective sense of balance” (Dubin 1987).

Between the time the WPA ended and CETA began, direct job support from the federal government had fallen out of favor. CETA was only the second of two programs since the Depression that provided relief through public service employment (Department of Labor 1977). The efficiency of public service employment was continually debated during the Nixon/Ford administration, specifically whether or not it

increased employment or if other expenditures or tax cuts resulted in better outcomes. There were also concerns over the potential for political problems created by scaling down public service employment after the economy improved (Department of Labor 1977).

One of the primary objectives of the Nixon/Ford administration was to establish “New Federalism,” a term to describe a new “working partnership between the Federal Government and the States and localities” (Department of Labor 1977). It was based on the philosophy that decisions were better when they were made by those “directly concerned;” therefore the Federal Government should exist to support local levels and grant them more responsibilities and decision making powers in order to bring the “government closer to the people” (Department of Labor 1977). As a perfect example of New Federalism, CETA was the first national, decentralized employment and training program and was structured on the assumption that state, county, and city levels of government were better able to identify and design programs that addressed the manpower needs of their own communities (Department of Labor 1975).

These local levels of government served as what was referred to as “prime sponsors” for the various projects that they oversaw; advisory boards and planning councils were created to provide guidance in the development and monitoring of programs and their outcomes (O’Leary & Eberts 2009). The legislation for CETA required that these planning councils include a fair representation of the community they served; this would include people who represented a variety of groups that had an interest in manpower policy decision. These groups included community and grassroots organizations, employment services, education and training institutions, businesses, and

agricultural groups. There were no specifications from the Department of Labor on the percentage of representation by these groups on the advisory boards; those decisions were also left up to the elected officials' discretion in the individual localities (Department of Labor 1975).

Once a plan had been developed by a prime sponsor, it was the responsibility of the Secretary of Labor, and his or her staff, to review and approve the plans to ensure that they were in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the Act (Department of Labor 1975). Additionally, the Department of Labor was responsible for assessing the performance of CETA prime sponsors which focused on "three types of activities: reviewing compliance; assessing performance in relation to the goals in the approved plan; and evaluating program impact or effectiveness" (Department of Labor 1975).

Federal funds were disbursed through large block grants to top elected official in each locality so that the local government could make the decision as to which programs and projects received funding. This was expected to reduce concerns about overlapping or duplicated allocations and allow for greater coordination with other agencies and departments in the community. Additionally, it created more flexibility and localized responses to the manpower needs in each locality (Department of Labor 1975). Funding was limited to local and state governments with populations over 100,000 (Riojas 2006). The amount that each prime sponsor received was based on a formula that took into account the unemployment and income level of each locality (Barnes 1975).

CETA was broken down into seven titles in which a project could qualify for funding. Title I was the largest of all the titles. It laid the background work for prime sponsors to provide manpower services, including training, employment, counseling,



testing, and placement (Department of Labor 1975). Title II was also among the larger of the qualifying titles. It authorized prime sponsors in areas with substantial unemployment levels (6.5% or higher) to develop transitional public service job opportunities (Department of Labor 1975). Title III allowed for a few specific national programs for which the Department of Labor served as the prime sponsor. These programs were administered by the Secretary of Labor. They included assistance for Native American groups, youth, and migrant and seasonal farmers, along with research and evaluation of CETA-sponsored projects (Department of Labor 1975). Title IV transitioned authority for the Jobs Corps program over to CETA; it had previously been authorized under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (Department of Labor 1975). Title V was different from all other titles as it provided for the National Commission for Manpower Policy to act as its own independent policy advisory group (Department of Labor 1975). Title VI was added to CETA by the Emergency Jobs and Unemployment Assistance Act of 1974, after the unemployment level peaked, and provided for emergency and temporary public service jobs; the purpose of this title was to ease the impact of the high unemployment rates (Department of Labor 1975). The seventh and final title of CETA did not provide for jobs or training programs itself but contained the “necessary definitions and administrative procedures to assist in the orderly management of the act” (Department of Labor 1975).

The majority of the arts and cultural related programs received authorization Title II and Title VI, as they were intended to create public service jobs. Those who qualified for work on a CETA funded program, arts related or not, became an employee of the program’s prime sponsor, making them an employee of the state, county, or city government (Dubin 1987).

Beyond a program fitting into a specific title and money going directly to either salaries or expenses related to training programs, there were few limitations on what could be done with CETA funding. Each prime sponsor reserved the authority to decide which programs and projects it wanted to assign CETA funding to. Both public or governmental agencies and well as non-profit organizations were eligible to receive money from CETA to create new jobs or establish job training programs.

One of the major stipulations for a person to be eligible to be employed under CETA was that they had to be out of work for a minimum of thirty days. To be considered under-employed a person would need to be working fewer than ten hours per week or be making less than \$30 a week (Dubin 1987). The time constraints for those unemployed workers were designed to discourage cities from laying off regular employees only to rehire them again with federal funds (Barnes 1975). The standards for eligibility were revised in 1974, the second year of CETA. The required period of under- or unemployment increased from thirty days to fifteen weeks. Eligibility was also determined according to federal income and poverty standards based on the person's family size, which was \$3,140 per year for an individual and then increased incrementally based on the number of family members (Dubin 1987). Additionally, prime sponsors and qualifying projects were to give preference to those on welfare and veterans of the Vietnam War. Salaries for those employed by CETA-sponsored programs were to be set at prevailing levels with a maximum of \$10,000 annually (Department of Labor 1978). Agencies were also expected to try and find permanent positions for at least half of their CETA funded employees (Barnes 1975).

The type of work that CETA sponsored, especially in the realm of public service, was quite varied as it was defined as, but not limited to:

work in such fields as environmental quality, health care, education, public safety, crime prevention and control, prison rehabilitation, transportation, recreation, maintenance of parks, streets and other public facilities, solid waste removal, pollution control, housing and neighborhood improvement, rural development, conservation, beautification, veterans outreach, and other fields of human betterment and community improvement (Barnes 1975).

As a result, CETA-sponsored workers engaged in a wide variety of sub-professional positions such as teacher and library aides, traffic directors, crossing guards, and emergency telephone operators. In fact, at one point, half of all the zookeepers in New York City's zoos were CETA trainees. This was a "controversial innovation which, nonetheless, enabled a troubled municipal service to continue" (Dubin 1987).

As was mentioned before, prime sponsors had a great deal of flexibility in the types of jobs or programs they chose to support with CETA funds, several arts- and cultural-focused programs were chosen all throughout the country. In the beginning only a handful of arts programs were selected. As was the case with the WPA, the focus for CETA was providing work for those in need and not creating art. Unlike the WPA, the idea for support for the arts and artists did not come from Washington but started at the local level.

The first arts-based program that qualified for CETA sponsorship was established in San Francisco around 1970, but did not receive CETA funding until 1974. Mission District Murals was a project of the San Francisco Art Commission's Neighborhood Arts Program, which was funded with a small portion of the city's hotel

tax revenues. It emerged from young Latino artists who had taken an interest in traditional mural techniques (Barnes 1975). In 1971, the city of San Francisco used surplus funding from the Supplemental Training and Employment Program to hire around a dozen muralists at \$80 a week. Once those funds ran out, these muralists found themselves on their own again. As one artist described it, they thrived by “free-lancing and free-loading,” this was a common feeling for many artists at the time (Barnes 1975).

When CETA funding became available, the San Francisco Art Commission chose not only to fund the Mission District Murals project but many others under the Neighborhood Arts Program. In fact, the city poured more than 11% of its entire CETA budget into hiring artists of a variety of mediums including everything from muralists and filmmakers to playwrights and historians (Barnes 1975).<sup>3</sup> Those employed with CETA funding would be given the civil service classification of ‘curatorial aides,’ paid \$270 biweekly, and put to work for at least six months (Barnes 1975). For the initial 113 jobs that were available, the Arts Commission received over 600 applicants, many of whom had advanced degrees and portfolios to match and had been “surviving on low-skill jobs, food stamps, unemployment or welfare” (Barnes 1975). After clearing an initial screening process, qualified candidates were interviewed by a committee that consisted of both Art Commission and manpower office employees. Beyond quality and talent as an artist the main criteria the Art Commission was looking for was an artist’s ability to communicate his or her skills to others. They were specifically seeking artists who could

---

<sup>3</sup> The total percentage of San Francisco’s CETA budget that went towards the Art Commission’s Neighborhood Arts Program was likely higher than 11 %. The exact amount is unknown because the source that cites this figure was written in 1975, recently after the project began receiving funding through CETA. Other sources were not able to provide a cumulative amount.

lead workshops and public performances, not just someone to work in a studio all day (Barnes 1975).

The San Francisco Art Commission created a videotape documenting the work CETA artists were creating. This video was quickly and widely circulated. Many attribute the video and the work of the San Francisco Art Commission's Neighborhood Arts Program to be the inspiration for subsequent programs in other cities (Dubin 1987). As a result, CETA administrators and prime sponsors began to realize that these arts programs were in line with the goals of CETA and soon more and more arts projects were requesting support. By 1979, the Department of Labor appointed a special CETA-arts coordinator to assist in the monitoring and analysis of the arts programs. Additionally, two conferences were held in 1979 and 1980 to bring together the leaders of CETA-arts programs to share ideas. In 1979, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was encouraging arts organizations to take advantage of the funding that was available to them through CETA. In fact, the NEA included advice for arts organizations on how best to utilize these resources in a newsletter:

It should be noted that prime sponsors have considerable authority and flexibility in the local interpretation of CETA rules. They cannot, however, be sensitive to the needs and peculiarities of arts groups unless these are specifically defined by the organizations themselves ...You can play a significant role in determining how the rules are established for your own activities, and you should do so (Dubin 1987).

The word quickly spread that funding to hire artists "was available and it was adaptable" (Dubin 1987: 17). Soon a variety of arts and cultural programs designed to put artists to

work improving their communities began cropping up all over the country (Barnes 1975).

Nearly sixty different non-profit arts- and community-based organizations received \$2.4 million in CETA funds to support 284 arts- or cultural-related jobs in Chicago. On average each of these organizations were able to support between two and seven jobs with CETA funding (Dubin 1987). It is important to note that CETA funding only supported salaries and wages for workers. There was no funding available for supplies, materials, or to rent facilities. This meant that for artists to be able to create, the non-profit organizations and government agencies that the projects were housed under needed to use other funding to provide the artists with necessary materials.

In Los Angeles, 71 people were hired for a CETA-sponsored theatre program that led to the creation of three acting companies, two dance companies, and a puppet company, all of which toured schools, hospitals, senior, and recreational centers. These six touring companies alone provided free performances to over 16,000 people (Department of Labor 1978). The Chicago Council on Fine Arts created an Artists-in-Residence (AIR) program that lasted from 1978 to 1980, during which 108 artists in a variety of disciplines including dance, film, music, photography, theatre, graphic design, and administration were supported through CETA funding. This was one of the largest beneficiaries of arts-related CETA funding. As a Title VI project, AIR attempted to provide both countercyclical and structural assistance for unemployed artists by providing temporary employment to highly trained workers, thus addressing the counter-cyclical aspect, and addressed the structural concern by training the artists at the same time. AIR did not claim to develop these workers' artistic skill but rather their ability to adapt and repackage their skills for "real market situations" (Dubin 1987).

Many artists were placed in various city agencies as program or production assistants that could easily be absorbed into permanent positions (Dubin 1987).

Chicago's AIR program also provided access to the arts in senior centers, schools, and child care facilities along with other institutions with limited access to similar resources (Dubin 1987). Unfortunately, when many of the artists left the program they took with them experience and new-found skills but found it difficult to find comparable jobs in the private sector (Dubin 1987).

The desired end product of AIR and the majority of the other CETA-arts projects was the development of a new class of "cultural workers," defined by CETA researcher Steven Dubin as:

individuals with artistic training who had successfully learned to adapt their skills to the existing market, whose needs as workers could be seriously acknowledged as those of other occupational groups, and whose contributions to the health and welfare of local communities would be considered of value and thus worthy of continued support (Dubin 1987).

Along with the creation of cultural workers, it was hoped that certain stereotypes and assumptions of artists as workers would decrease and therefore the number of opportunities would increase. Artists were frequently seen as "ascetic characters" who challenged "many of the accepted notions of what it means to be members of a professional group in this society" (Dubin 1987). A large majority of these artists underwent advanced training and reported stronger than average ties to their identity through their chosen profession. However, their rates of unemployment and income levels were drastically lower than other professionals with similar traits (Dubin 1987). All

too often, their uniqueness was emphasized while their similarities to other professions and groups were overlooked.

As previously mentioned, the majority of the CETA arts programs were authorized under Title II and Title VI. Title II took a structural approach to those who faced long-term economic disadvantages while Title VI was intended to provide short-term, countercyclical employment. The individual goals for both titles fit the needs of artists well. Many artists fell into the definition of structurally unemployed, since the number of positions available for artists, in artistic fields, were very limited and the number of individuals wanting or needing those jobs often exceeded the number of openings. Cyclical unemployment was often a challenge for artists as they frequently worked on either a commission basis or on projects that had definite endpoints. Artists also found themselves working short-term jobs outside their field to fill gaps between artistic projects (Dubin 1987). Additionally, the competition for these more marginal, non-artistic jobs tends to be more acute during harsh economic times (Dubin 1987).

Many more artists might have been able to gain assistance through CETA employment if the time period of eligibility for under- or unemployment had not changed from thirty days to fifteen weeks in 1974. It was not uncommon for artists to find themselves out of work for thirty day stretches; however, due to low incomes it was nearly impossible for artists to go fifteen weeks without any kind of work to cover the most basic living expenses (Dubin 1987). The AIR Program in Chicago surveyed its CETA workers in 1979 and found that in the year prior to their employment with CETA only 21% had been able to support themselves as artists and work outside the arts was required. Additionally, only 42% had ever been able to fully support themselves through their artistry alone at any time before being involved with CETA (Dubin 1987). When



asked what the biggest obstacle was in furthering their careers, respondents in all artistic disciplines stated the inability to find steady income for a substantial amount of time (Dubin 1987).

There were some artists who were able to slip past the standards for eligibility. In a few cases it was discovered that artists between jobs were successful at gaining employment through CETA; it is also quite probable that these same issues were seen outside of the arts, too. Eventually, a stipulation was added that took the household income into consideration when determining eligibility of employment, rather than just the individuals' (Dubin 1987).

In addition to meeting the standard qualifications for either unemployment or underemployment for work on a CETA sponsored project, artists were often required to have a specific level of talent or ability in their artistic medium. This was not the case with all CETA-arts programs, but many were able to petition for special dispensations from the Department of Labor that allowed for the administrators of a program to take talent and competency into account when hiring. Generally, the agency overseeing a CETA sponsored project would be given the files for the first three applicants meeting the eligibility requirements for a particular field. If the agency did not make a selection from those three individuals they would usually lose the position (Dubin 1987). Many CETA-arts programs were permitted to have artists review panels in which artists chose their own finalists for open positions. They argued that this review process was necessary due to the high level of competition for these jobs, and the panels were "essential to the selection process because the mechanical skills of artists are secondary to qualitative factors which require trained experts to distinguish" (Dubin 1987). As one administrator in New York put it, they were not "looking for the fastest artists, but

rather the best artists” (Dubin 1987). Candidates submitted portfolios of their work and written summaries of their prior experiences, media reviews, and personal statements. Generally, separate panels evaluated the work of artists of different disciplines (Dubin 1987).

These arts-specific programs, like all others supported by CETA, were not able to provide much in the way of promotions, rewards, or even job security – tenure simply did not exist under CETA. Artists, and most other CETA workers, knew not to expect to be employed on the project for more than one year. Limitations were set on how long a CETA worker could be employed in order to discourage expectations that a project might continue indefinitely. This was thought to increase the number of people who were able to benefit from CETA; if a worker was eligible to stay on a project for a long-term basis, it meant another would miss out on that opportunity (Dubin 1987). In this case, after a year the original person would be replaced by someone new. Additionally, most projects were only funded on an annual basis to encourage the development of new activities to incorporate new workers (Dubin 1987). CETA employees could also be discharged from a project before their maximum time had been met. Sometimes this was due to a lack of need, skill, or other concern, but frequently, especially within the arts projects, it was because of their group assignment. Many of the performance-based projects involved ensemble work. Often times one member of the ensemble’s tenure might expire before the others (Dubin 1987).

When developing CETA and giving administrative control to hundreds of state and local agencies, the federal government essentially failed to set any firm recordkeeping or reporting requirements; essentially, none of these agencies were held accountable for what was done with CETA funding (Riojas 2006). Due to a lack of

regulations for reporting, it has been difficult for researchers to come up with exact figures for the total amount of funding that went towards CETA-art projects and the total number of individuals who were supported through these projects, much less for CETA as a whole. The records that do exist contain mostly raw placement figures and contain very little information regarding the experiences of the participants, long-term impacts, information on the types of jobs that were supported, or the effect the various programs and projects had on different industries (Riojas 2006). At the very beginning of CETA, sponsored programs were expected to report monthly to the Department of Labor, but it was soon decided that this was too burdensome for most and was phased out along with other requirements that resulted in “unnecessary paperwork” (Department of Labor 1975).

There are existing estimates that by 1977 the federal government had spent nearly \$40 million (approximately \$148 million in today’s dollars) on arts related salaries, totaling nearly 0.5% of the program’s annual budget (Riojas 2006; Bureau of Labor Statistics). By 1979 over 10,000 artists and “related personnel” had been supported through CETA (Riojas 2006). Other estimations indicate that by 1978, a total of \$75 million (approximately \$233 million in today’s dollars) was spent on positions for artists and supportive personnel, providing approximately 7,500 jobs through 200 different state and local government agencies (Department of Labor 1978; Bureau of Labor Statistics). In total, by the time the program ended, CETA allocations to arts organizations and projects were equal to “one-third those of the NEA” and hit levels of 43 to 46% between 1977 and 1979 (Riojas 2006). In 1980, when the NEA and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) were up for reauthorization it was revealed that CETA supported 600 arts-related projects in 200 locations and employed

approximately 10,000 artists and other cultural workers with an investment of \$200 million by the federal government (Riojas 2006). Congressional witnesses in support of the reauthorization attributed much of that success to CETA. Two titles provided the majority of funding for arts projects, Title II and Title VI. By 1978 these two titles accounted for more than 65% of all CETA jobs combined (Dubin 1987). At the time of the first national CETA arts conference in 1979, the arts accounted for 2% of the public service positions under Title VI of CETA (Dubin 1987).

Criticisms of CETA and its funding of arts projects were numerous. One of the biggest complaints against CETA was over the lack of recordkeeping. Almost every researcher in this study saw it as a major fault of the project because it made it very difficult for real assessments to be constructed. Individual prime sponsors may have required their qualifying projects to report back to them, but there were few, if any, reports sent back to the federal government. Allegations of fraud and abuse arose against the CETA funded arts projects, and several other non-arts projects, because of the lack of information available on those who were employed in these programs and their level of need at the time they were hired. Other critics were concerned that CETA workers may have been hired in governmental positions that could have “otherwise been funded by state or local monies,” in what some referred to as “substitution” (Riojas 2006). Additionally, there were complaints that some projects may have employed ineligible individuals or kept them on a project longer than the limits set by the legislation (Riojas 2006).

Mismanagement of funds and improper supervision was also a common concern. One of the primary criticisms of the CETA-sponsored arts projects was simply over the question of why was the federal government was putting taxpayer dollars

towards the arts. One such critic of CETA questioned the validity of funding going towards the arts, stating that if CETA was going to fund a symphony why not an airline or a baseball team (Dubin 1987). Once again, the arts and artists were seen as frivolous and unworthy of federal relief.

Regardless of how successful CETA was at providing jobs and new skills for workers, eliminating the program became a priority for newly elected Congress in November 1980; “organizational uncertainty was replaced by the certainty of dissolution” (Dubin 1987). The only question that remained was how long it would take. The majority of the public service employment programs under Titles II and VI were phased out beginning in the fall of 1981. The new shift in Washington led to a new taboo on public service employment and direct jobs support once again (O’Leary & Eberts 2009). In 1982, CETA was replaced by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) which limited the choices for training to skills that were applicable to jobs that were in local demand. JTPA was able to increase partnerships between the public and private sectors by creating local advisory boards to ensure that business interests were represented (O’Leary & Eberts 2009).

Between the funding received through CETA, the NEA, and a few other federal sources the late 1970s and early 1980s the arts received what was then considered to be unprecedented levels of support. In fact, between 1975, when the first art program received support through CETA, and 1992, funding for the NEA continued to rise steadily, reaching an all time high in 1992 with an allocation of over \$175 million.<sup>4</sup> While there does not appear to be any research to substantiate this, some of the additional support for the NEA received in the years following CETA could possibly be attributed to

---

<sup>4</sup> The NEA allocation grew every year with the exception of fiscal years 1982, 1983, and 1985 which declined from the previous year.

the gains that were made through the placement of thousands of artists under CETA and a realization that cultural workers are significant contributors to the American workforce.

## **AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT**

In 2008 the United States was once again facing an economic crisis. The stock market had taken quite a hit, the housing industry had essentially fallen apart, and thousands soon found themselves unemployed. Between the start of the recession in December 2007 and October 2009 the number of unemployed workers increased from 7.5 million to 15.7 million, raising the unemployment rate from 4.9 to 10.2% (O’Leary & Eberts 2009). Between October 2008 and October 2009 the newly filed unemployment claims averaged 577,000 per week. Two weeks prior to President Obama taking the oath of office, over 955,000 American workers filed new unemployment claims (O’Leary & Eberts 2009). The President knew he had to move quickly to stem the rising tide of unemployment.

Only weeks after being sworn into office, Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), which had three main goals: create new jobs and save existing ones; spur economic activity and invest in long-term growth; and foster unprecedented levels of accountability and transparency in government spending. ARRA intended to achieve those goals by: providing \$288 billion in tax cuts and benefits for millions of working families and businesses; increasing federal funds for education, health care, and entitlement programs by \$224 billion; making \$275 billion available for federal contracts, grants and loans; and, requiring recipients of Recovery funds to report quarterly on how they used the money (Recovery and Transparency Board).

Those who supported the bill saw it “as a vital lifeline for an economy heading toward a second Great Depression” (Wilson 2011). They touted the projections coming from the White House and other sources indicating that ARRA would create or save

around 3.5 million jobs in its first two years. However, it was certainly met with much resistance as well. Critics of the stimulus package claimed that it would “unduly swell the federal deficit while having minimal or even negative impact on employment and economic growth” (Wilson 2011). Now, nearing the close of the fourth year of ARRA the two sides still continue to argue about the effectiveness of the stimulus.

As a result of the harsh economic times, non-profit arts organizations were struggling. Donations from individuals and corporations quickly declined and several organizations lost thousands or even millions of dollars on their investments. In 2009, organizations in New York City alone experienced over \$93 million in realized losses on their investments and an additional \$1 billion in unrealized losses (Jones 2012). At one point it was expected that possibly 10% of organizations might be forced to go out of business as because of the fallout from the recession (Nance 2009). Many of these arts organization were struggling to keep their doors open and were considering implementing layoffs or wage decreases to help make ends meet. As part of the \$275 billion in federal contracts, grants, and loans ARRA provided the NEA received an allocation of \$50 million to be distributed through a competitive grant program to fund existing and create new jobs that would support the artistic mission of non-profit arts organizations.

It was an incredibly difficult battle to get the NEA allocation into the bill, much less to keep it there. Only mere days after Obama took office, the House of Representatives and the Senate introduced bills for the new stimulus package. The House’s version was brought to the floor by Congressman David Obey of Wisconsin and included a specific provision blocking zoos and aquariums from receiving any funds from the bill. While zoos and aquariums do not typically receive funding from the NEA, many



consider them to be a part of the cultural industry as living museums or collections and they make up a significant portion of the non-profit sector. This bill was passed by the House with a 244-188 vote only two days later.

The original Senate bill that was introduced by Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii did not include any prohibitive language related to zoos and aquariums. However, several restrictive amendments were debated. Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma soon announced his intention to bring forth an amendment that would not only prohibit zoos and aquariums from receiving funding, but also any “museum, theater, arts center, or highway beautification project, including renovation, remodeling, construction, salaries, furniture, zero-gravity chairs, big screen televisions, beautification, rotating pastel lights, and dry heat saunas” (American Alliance of Museums). While this exact amendment was never formally introduced and voted on, the day after this announcement Senator Coburn introduced an amendment that did include language regarding zoos, aquariums, museums, theaters, and art centers which was, unfortunately, adopted by the Senate in a 73-24 vote.

Several conservative members of Congress voiced concern over what sort of activities might be funded if the NEA received an allocation from the bill. Representative Eric Cantor of Virginia tried to claim that of that \$50 million, \$300,000 would go towards a sculpture garden in Miami, which he proclaimed would not do anything to stimulate the economy and gave Congress free reign for pork barrel spending (Grunwald 2012). He was basing this claim on a grant the Vizcaya Museum and Gardens had received in the previous year to restore a portion of the gardens, and not on anything that actually appeared in the bill (PolitiFact.com). Additionally, Cantor was concerned that at that time there were no specific guidelines as to how the NEA should spend the money.

Others in Congress reared back to defend the allocations to the arts. Representative Obey's spokeswoman Kristin Brost was quoted as saying, "artists need jobs just like everyone else. \$50 million out of \$825 billion doesn't seem like an extreme amount to support our artists" (PolitiFact.com).

As a result of the conflicts and the added amendments, the NEA no longer expected to receive any funding from ARRA (Stage Directions 2009). Advocacy organizations such as Americans for the Arts and the Performing Arts Alliance engaged several activists and advocates and set out on campaigns to educate the public and members of Congress on the importance of the including funding for the arts in the recovery effort. During this time period, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi reportedly received a phone call from Robert Redford, one of her favorite actors, asking her to help retain funding for the arts in the bill (Grunwald 2012). The two different versions of the stimulus bill were resolved by the House-Senate conference committee, during which time the limitations on museums, theaters, and art centers were removed but the provisions against providing funding for zoos and aquariums remained intact. After the bill passed, Americans for the Arts shared a statement on its website thanking various leaders on Capitol Hill who "carried [their] voices into the conference negotiation room and throughout the halls of Congress" and worked to make the case for the arts, the value of "protecting jobs in the creative sector," and their impact on the economy (Stage Directions 2009). Ironically, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law on February 17<sup>th</sup> at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (American Alliance of Museums).

The final inclusion of the NEA allocation in the Act reads as follows:

For an additional amount for “Grants and Administration”, \$50,000,000, to be distributed in direct grants to fund arts projects and activities which preserve jobs in the non-profit arts sector threatened by declines in philanthropic and other support during the current economic downturn: *Provided*, That 40 percent of such funds shall be distributed to State arts agencies and regional arts organizations in a manner similar to the agency’s current practice and 60 percent of such funds shall be for competitively selected arts projects and activities according to sections 2 and 5(c) of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 951, 954(c)): *Provided further*, That matching requirements under section 5(e) of such Act shall be waived (U.S. Congress).

According to Victoria Hunter, Communications Director for the NEA at the time, the funds received through ARRA were “intended to be timely, temporary, and targeted - timely in that [they were] meeting an immediate need; temporary in that this [was] bridge funding; and targeted in that organizations who've applied [were] making the case that these funds will have a specific purpose, preserving a specific job” and were “designed to help organizations over a hump, and tide them over until a time when, ideally, things get a little better or circumstances change” (Nance 2009).

There were two ways in which a worker in an arts organization could be supported through ARRA: full or partial salary support for one or more positions that were “critical to an organization’s artistic mission” which had either been eliminated or were in jeopardy due to the economic climate; and/or “fees for previously engaged artists and/or contractual personnel to maintain or expand the period during which such

persons would be engaged” (National Endowment for the Arts 2009a). In addition to the typical details included in a grant application, the narrative portion of the application included basic information such as the job title and description, along with the salary and anticipated number of weeks of employment or a description of the artists or contract personnel, the project they would be working on, the fees associated with those positions, and the number of weeks of employment regarding each position for which the organization was requesting assistance (National Endowment for the Arts 2009b). Organizations were also asked to describe a position’s significance to the mission of the organization and the anticipated effects if curtailed or eliminated. Organizations were permitted to apply for funding for essentially any position as long as they were able to justify its importance in supporting the artistic mission. However, fundraising and development positions were strictly prohibited from qualifying for assistance. It should be noted that with the rare exception of a few grant programs the NEA does not typically provide funding for individual artists. Therefore, individual artists were not permitted to apply for funding from ARRA.

When reviewing the applications, the NEA grant panelists were given specific guidelines for evaluating an application. The main criteria were the “artistic excellence and artistic merit of the project” which also took into consideration:

- quality of the organization; potential of the project to have a significant
- and immediate impact on the arts work force; significance of the project
- and position(s) to the mission and core work of the organization;
- ...ability to carry out the project including the appropriateness of the
- budget, the quality and clarity of the project goals and design, the

resources involved, and the qualification of the project's personnel  
(National Endowment for the Arts, 3).

The NEA, and other federal agencies, were required to collect information about the projects they funded in order to track the outcomes of activities to report back to Congress. This particular grant program had the following outcome: "organizations enhance their ability to realize their artistic and public service goals" (National Endowment for the Arts 2009a). Panelists were also asked to evaluate an applicant's ability to achieve this outcome and the feasibility of meeting reporting requirements to prove the outcome was met. Applicants were asked to explain exactly what they intended to achieve, how they would measure their level of success, and at the end of the grant period how they would determine what was learned from their success or failure.

Organizations that were awarded ARRA funded grants from any source were required to report on the use of funds quarterly. They were to report to both the agency from which they received the grant and to the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, which was created through ARRA legislation, via the Recovery.gov website. This website was designed specifically to allow taxpayers to track how and where ARRA funds were spent. As mentioned before, transparency was a significant factor in the overall design of the act and all ARRA grant, contract, and loan recipients were required to use the Recovery.gov website's reporting features.

The NEA recognized the urgency to get the money out the door and into the hands of the organizations in need; for many organizations this funding was a matter of being able to carry on, having to drastically cut programs, or even worse, shut their doors. The organizations that were hurting the most were already operating on limited

budgets; for them to be able to receive funds that would directly support salaries made it possible for them to keep their staff and redirect other funds in order to continue providing programs to their communities. The NEA moved quickly to disperse funds to the arts organizations. In less than a month they had already approved grants for the first 40% of the money. The NEA was among the first government agencies to allocate its ARRA funds.

The NEA provided over 700 direct grants to non-profit arts and cultural organizations, totaling 60% of the \$50 million allocation (National Endowment for the Arts 2012). Direct grants to arts organizations from the NEA were given at two levels: \$50,000 or \$25,000. Additionally, the remaining 40% was given to state and local arts agencies in all 50 states and the District of Columbia as well as regional arts organizations, including Arts Midwest, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Mid-American Arts Alliance, New England Foundation for the Arts, South Arts, Western States Arts Foundation, to be re-granted. In total, through ARRA the NEA provided over 1,100 grants to support jobs in the arts (Recovery & Transparency Board). Re-grants of the remaining 40% from regional arts organizations and State Arts Agencies varied from agency to agency as each one had the liberty to set their own guidelines. The grant period was intended to last for a maximum of one year, however some grantees were able to extend projects longer and there are a handful that are continuing to expend funds from ARRA more than three years later.

To date, ARRA has awarded over \$241 billion in grants, contracts, and loans.<sup>5</sup> The portion of this total amount that the NEA received adds up to 0.02% of all grants,

---

<sup>5</sup> As of September 25, 2012.

contracts, and loans or 0.0006% of the entire \$840 billion for all ARRA expenditures, including tax benefits and entitlements. Out of the \$50 million the NEA was allocated from ARRA, it paid out \$49,981,306 in grants to 1,112 arts and cultural organizations in all fifty states; on average each grantee received approximately \$45,000 (Recovery & Transparency Board). The remaining \$18,694 was used by the NEA to cover the administrative expenses such as “costs associated with panels and travel, contractual support... [for] Information Technologies operations, and staffing” (Recovery & Transparency Board). Originally, the NEA had budgeted to spend \$500,000 on these administrative expenses, but the agency was actually able to spend significantly less. As a result, over 5,140 full time equivalency jobs (FTE) were supported or preserved through ARRA and the NEA over a two year period.<sup>6</sup> Among those 5,140 jobs supported were three actors in a production of *Richard III* at Chicago’s Shakespeare Theatre; an additional week’s salaries for all of the actors in the new work *Little House on the Prairie: The Musical* based on the works of Laura Ingalls Wilder at the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, New Jersey; the designer of a Cezanne exhibit at the Montclair Art Museum also in New Jersey; an administrative assistant and a web marketing consultant for the Jazz Bakery Performance Space in Los Angeles; the production manager for the Southwest Chamber Music Society also in Los Angeles; and many others (Grabell 2012; Los Angeles County Arts Commission).

---

<sup>6</sup> It must be noted that this figure is for full time equivalency (FTEs) jobs and does not count the total number of individuals who benefited from this program, in fact significantly more than 5,000 people may have benefited since FTEs are based on the number of hours that a person worked compared to that of a full time person (40 hours per week, for an entire year). Organizations were only permitted to record the time that a supported worker was spending on the particular project for which they received funding. Frequently, workers in the arts industry spend their time on several projects and activities in a single day, so it is very likely that the number of people supported would be much higher than 5,143.

As was foreshadowed by the difficulty getting the allocation for the NEA into the bill in the first place, there was a great deal of criticism from politicians and the media once it was in place. Funding for the NEA has come under scrutiny since its formation in 1965 and especially since the Culture Wars of the 1990s. One of the most common criticisms towards federal funding for the arts is that it is frivolous, a sentiment commonly heard during the WPA and CETA eras as well. In the case of ARRA, many felt that it was more important to invest in building infrastructure, leaving artists and their advocates to defend their need to feed their families and pay their mortgages (Grabell 2012).

Senator Coburn's attack on the arts, for example, did not stop after the bill was passed; harkening back to the days of the WPA he was concerned about funds supporting Communist sympathizers and pointed specifically to In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre in Minneapolis, Minnesota which received \$25,000 in ARRA funds. The organization takes its name from a popular Che Guevara quote and produces an annual Mayday parade featuring artists who are openly against "free market fundamentalism" (Grabell 2012). The conservative cable news channel Fox News also criticized the grant a film society in San Francisco received that had recently screened the movie *Thundercrack* which was described as "the world's only underground kinky art porno horror film, complete with four men, three women, and a gorilla," and a dance company that performed in the nude (Grabell 2012). In both of these instances, the organizations in question did not receive funding to support these projects directly, but rather for administrative salary support.

The media and politicians were not the only ones voicing their opinions against the NEA during this time. In fact, there was a great deal of criticism coming from within



the non-profit arts industry and arts advocates as well. The majority of these criticisms focused on the structure and the requirements of the grant program itself. In the interest of expediting the allocation of the funds, the NEA placed a stipulation that all direct grant applicants must have received a grant from the NEA within the past three years.<sup>7</sup> Robert Lynch, President and CEO of American for the Arts, stated that this rule limited “the pool of eligible applicants, and there are a hundred thousand arts organizations out there, all of whom need help” (Williams 2009). Nina Ozlu Tunceli, the General Counsel of Government and Public Affairs with Americans for the Arts, noted how difficult it is for an organization to compete for and receive a grant from the NEA and that the majority of the organizations that are successful in doing so are generally the major institutions (Williams 2009).

The NEA defended its eligibility guidelines, suggested by the Office of Management and Budget, which still allowed for about three thousand arts organizations to be eligible for ARRA grants. Additionally, groups that had not received NEA funding in the past four years were eligible for stimulus money through regional, state, and local arts agency sub-granting programs (Nance 2009). The requirements were intended to streamline the application and review process, but no matter how hard the NEA fought to have people understand this, the limitations surrounding the direct grants were not widely supported.

However, arts organizations were not ungrateful for the funds that were available to them. Leaders of these organizations knew that \$25,000 or \$50,000 may not be enough to save an entire season, but it was an excellent opportunity to invest in other areas such as bolstering a marketing department or extending the run of a

---

<sup>7</sup> A direct grant refers to those who received funds from the NEA and not through a re-grant from another organization or agency.

promising production (Williams 2009). On the other hand, these grants could be transformative for other organizations or at the very least to the lives of individuals. Tree Swinson of the Academy of American Poets stated that “\$25,000 [could] make the difference between retaining someone who is barely able to earn a salary and that person’s having to go get a job elsewhere” (Nance 2009).

At the beginning of the recession in 2008 there was a great deal of concern over how the arts industry would fare and if it would be able to recover from the financial losses. Many organizations were worried about fulfilling their artistic missions with diminished resources, especially in regards to their staff and other workers. If it were not for the NEA and a multitude of arts advocates it is very likely that the arts industry may not have seen any funding from ARRA, and at the very least the structure of the program might have been different. Hopefully, the outcomes of this allocation to the arts will be great enough to encourage policy makers to recognize the importance of the arts on the economy and workforce.

## **FINDINGS**

The intention of this study was to examine the way in which the WPA, CETA and ARRA supported jobs in the arts in order to inform future policies. The original hypothesis for this study presumed that it would be possible to identify specific attributes of each program that should or should not be repeated. However, this has proved to be more difficult than expected, mainly because each program was designed to meet the specific economic, political, and social needs of the time and provide relief for workers that faced different problems. Beyond providing funding to support artists and other workers in the arts industry they had very little in common. The conditions under which each program was created will never replicate themselves and therefore a new approach must be taken with any future policy to meet current needs. Rather than specifically declare one program as the victor or definitively state how policy should be shaped in the future, this paper will present key comparison points for all three programs that should be considered if the country ever found itself in need of a job support program that would include the arts.

It was difficult to compare all three programs and to make a determination as to which elements of the programs may have been better than the others for several reasons. One of the main issues is the inability to make direct cause and effect relationships between particular elements of the programs and the outcomes. For example, there is not a conclusive way to determine if workers becoming employees of the federal government under the WPA, becoming employees of state and local governments in a program like CETA, or remaining employed by individual arts organizations under ARRA resulted in higher or lower employment levels or more

efficient programs. This again reflects back to the notion that a variety of external issues defined these programs and each was designed to support jobs in the arts in very different ways.

Another issue is the lack of records for the WPA and CETA. The figures that exist for budgets and the number of people supported by both of these programs are only estimates. Hard and fast numbers simply do not exist. Fortunately, for ARRA there are very precise numbers available but they are almost incomparable to the other two programs because they are FTE figures rather than counting individual people or jobs. Due to the lack of records, it is difficult to see the long term effects of the WPA and CETA, which may have been helpful in this analysis. Both of these earlier two programs created arts organizations and projects that continue to this day, which have resulted in decades of job opportunities for cultural workers. However, with the exception of a few personal stories it is hard to say what happened to the individuals who were supported by these programs after they ended. There is also a similar issue with ARRA, but here the problem is that this program was too recent to really be able to determine any long term effects.<sup>8</sup> It is worth noting that all three of these programs were intended to provide short term relief until the economy improved or individuals were able to find unsubsidized work. It was not the intention of any of these programs to support individuals for a long period of time, so the long term effects may not be significant.

When looking at the outcomes of all three programs, the WPA supported somewhere between an estimated 200,000 to 237,000 jobs over a four year period of time with total expenses of \$160 million (\$2.7 billion when adjusted for inflation); CETA

---

<sup>8</sup> Because there are details about what organizations received funding and to support which jobs, it would be possible to survey the organizations that received grants to find out if the supported position has been able to continue after the grant program ended.

supported an estimated 10,000 plus jobs over seven years, spending \$200 million (\$506 million when adjusted for inflation). Finally, ARRA supported over 5,140 FTE jobs over two years (two-thirds of which were supported in the first year only) with expenditures of \$50 million (Bureau of Labor Statistics). If the numbers of jobs supported for each program is broken down to an average on an annual basis, the WPA supported 50,000, CETA 1,430, and ARRA 2,570.<sup>9</sup> On a per job basis, the federal government spent on average about \$1,135 for each of the 200,000 supported under the WPA, \$20,000 for the 10,000 CETA employees, and \$9700 for the 5,140 ARRA supported FTE jobs.<sup>10</sup>

If these quantitative outcomes were the only thing taken into consideration, it would appear as though the WPA was the most successful of all three programs due to the high volume of jobs it supported and the low cost per job. CETA would appear to be the least successful; it was the longest running program at seven years and created 10,000 jobs, only twice that of ARRA in two years or twenty times fewer jobs than the WPA in four years. Finally, ARRA would appear to fall somewhere in the middle. In fact, if the level of support for the first year of ARRA had been sustained it could have supported as many as 13,600 jobs in four years (the length of the WPA) or 23,800 in seven years (the length of CETA). Therefore, if only looking at the numbers it would be easiest to say that in order to maximize the number of jobs supported in the arts the federal government should just repeat the policies of the Federal One Arts Projects of the WPA. Unfortunately, the numbers do not tell the whole story and the structure and

---

<sup>9</sup> The WPA figures were based on the conservative estimate of 200,000 total jobs. ARRA actually supported 3,436 jobs in the first year and the remaining 1,707 over in the subsequent years.

<sup>10</sup> From available documents, it is known that the average annual salary for a Federal One employee was approximately \$1,135 in 1938 (McDonald 1969). However, the rates for employees generally increased from one year to the next due to inflation. So the average wage over all four years would be different. The estimate used for CETA and ARRA here are based upon the total number of jobs supported divided by the total dollar amount that went towards jobs in the arts. The majority of the workers under CETA and the WPA were only supported for one year.

design of each program must be taken into consideration beyond the number of jobs supported.

All of the varying elements of each program are detailed throughout the paper and included in Table II and Table III. Table II includes details of each program such as the years in effect, the number of jobs supported, the unemployment rate when the legislation took effect, and the budgets for all three. Table III serves as a basic representation of main points of comparisons between all three programs to show where and how they were different or similar in structure and support for the arts. These main comparisons points or trends that were discovered in all three programs serve as the basis for the recommendations and consideration points for future policies.

As has been demonstrated, each of the three programs were structured in such a way that was based upon the politics, economy, society of the period. It is highly unlikely that any of these programs could ever be exactly replicated and supported by Washington or the general population, because of the ever evolving society we live in. However, there are certainly elements of each program that could be incorporated again in future programs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following two recommendations should be included in any future job support or stimulus program that will provide assistance for the arts. These are based upon observed trends in the WPA, CETA, and ARRA as well as contemporary practices in legislation. While the political climate is constantly in flux, it is unlikely that a desire for clear legislation and transparency will change anytime in the near future.

**ARTS INCLUDED IN LEGISLATION:** In order to have good, informed policy of any kind having detailed legislation is vitally important. Therefore, future legislation will need to clearly state how the support of the arts would be structured. This would include who is eligible to receive support, who has the authority to make decisions, and many other elements that will be identified as consideration points for legislators later in this study.

This, like many other elements, differed in all three of the past programs. The arts were not specifically included in any portion of CETA legislation; prime sponsors chose to support arts projects because they felt that the arts fell into the domain of public service and served the needs of their community. By not including the arts or defining exactly what activities CETA funding could support, beyond strictly salaries, the individual prime sponsors were granted a significant amount of freedom in deciding what they deemed to be appropriate. This high level of flexibility in conjunction with a lack of record keeping makes it incredibly difficult to evaluate the effect that CETA had on supporting workers in the arts.

On the other hand, the executive order that shaped the WPA and the legislation for ARRA both included detailed information on how the arts would be supported. The

formation and structure of the five discipline-specific Federal One Arts Projects was clearly laid out along with detailed information on what types of activities could be supported, defining how artists or workers were eligible for support, how the funds could be used, and much more. However, because the funding structure for the WPA and Federal One was not secured through the Executive Order but rather a series of Congressional appropriations it was vulnerable and left workers and project administrators uncertain at times. Even though there is little in the way of records for the number of people who were supported through Federal One, there is extensive information available on the projects that resulted.

For ARRA, the inclusion of the arts in the act was not nearly as detailed as it was in the WPA but it did give guidelines for how the funds should be disbursed - 60% directly to arts organizations by the NEA and 40% to specific re-granting agencies. It also stated that the funds were to be given to non-profit arts organization, not individual artists, and should be done so following the guidelines set forth in the founding legislation for the NEA, the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965 and its subsequent amendments. For ARRA, this reference to the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965 provided the definition of art and artists and provided guidelines for what organizations were eligible. For both the WPA and ARRA, because there was clearly defined language on what types of projects or organization could be supported and definitions of what constitutes an artist there were more limitations on these two programs than what was seen with CETA.

Without legislation to clearly define how the money can and cannot be used there is too much room for ambiguity. And where there is ambiguity there are too many opportunities for abuse and fraudulent uses of the funds. This is not just applicable to



the arts of course, but for any particular group or industry that is intended to receive funding from a federal job support or economic stimulus program.

**REPORTING REQUIREMENTS:** As part of the legislation, guidelines should be set for all funding recipients to keep uniform records of how the money is being spent, both inside and outside of the arts. This recommendation is mainly based on the current political climate and the desire for transparency from the American public. Additionally, requiring solid records is simply good policy. It allows for the federal government to evaluate the outcomes of investments more clearly and to track where the money is going. Without reporting requirements it makes it nearly impossible to evaluate the effects of a program.

As noted before, one of the limitations in evaluating both the WPA and CETA is the lack of records. Neither one of these programs required the governing agencies to keep records of the number of people who were supported nor how exactly funds were being spent. To counter this, record keeping was one of the major advantages in evaluating ARRA because all grant recipients, not just the arts portions, were contractually obligated to report to the federal government using a website that was designed specifically for these reporting measures. It would be impossible to say that record keeping, or the lack thereof, had any direct effect on the level of support and how many individuals benefited. This requirement for ARRA did force grant recipients to be accountable for the funds and increased transparency within the federal government, one of the key tenants of the act.

The requirement for keeping records should also be clearly outlined in the legislation. However, there are many points that policy makers would need to consider regarding this requirement. Processes and guidelines would need to be established.

Depending upon on the way in which the program was structured, legislators would also need to consider who the recipients report back to: a particular department or agency within the federal government, to a state or local agency, or to some other entity altogether? They would also need to decide the frequency or time frame in which the reports must be submitted. Policymakers should also specify if reports would be designed to collect information on the number of people and/or positions that were supported, full time equivalents, or a combination of both. Also, it should be decided if the records should be made publicly available so that others could conduct additional research and evaluations.

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

The following points highlight the differences in the structure of each program and present options for legislators to consider. The research on the WPA, CETA, and ARRA did not definitively prove the direct effects of each element and therefore recommending a particular approach is not possible at this time. However, each of these elements of structure represents important pieces of each program and the way in which it supported the arts. The recommendation is that all of these points and options be considered by legislators when crafting future policies. The outcomes of these decisions should be detailed in the legislation in order to define the structure and design of how the arts are to be supported, as noted earlier.

**OVERALL PROGRAM STRUCTURE:** One of the first points to considered is the way in which the program would be structured, specifically: how funds would be disbursed, who would be responsible for the oversight of the funds, and who would manage those employed through the program. Regardless of the decision on the structure, it would also need to be decided if this choice would only apply to the arts-specific portion or, if applicable, to all other non-arts related portions as well. The WPA, CETA, and ARRA all took very different approaches to the structure and design of the program.

The most centralized of all three programs was the WPA; all aspects were controlled by some level of federal government. The WPA was not just a piece of legislation but an entire federal agency. As noted before, every decision about the WPA

and Federal One Arts Projects was made by someone who worked for the federal government and everyone who was employed through the WPA was on the federal government's payroll. It was also the responsibility of the Federal One administration to do the hiring and firing of employees. In this sense, the WPA acted as a direct job support program and there was no middleman involved at any point. For all of the Federal One projects, the decisions about the individual project units that would be produced or created were made by someone within the administration of each discipline-specific project. The project units were also designed around the available talent in a specific area. Project units were managed at a local, regional, and/or state level, but this was done by someone employed by the federal government.

The WPA as a whole, not just the Federal One Arts Projects, was structured this way. For the first and only time in US history, everyone from high level administrators to construction workers to piccolo players that were supported by funds from the WPA were employed by the federal government, who was also responsible for all oversight of the programs. If the WPA administration learned of a project or activities it did not approve of they had the authority to pull funds and terminate the program. Because the WPA arts programs were "administered at the national level, the products of the component WPA parts... reflected on the political party dominating national offices" (Dubin 1987). As a result it was the federal government's duty and responsibility to defend any type of politically or morally offensive work. Concerns over the type of work that was being completed by the Federal Theatre and the Federal Writers projects led to the dismantling of all the Federal One projects in 1939, three years before the WPA as a whole ended.

CETA, on the other hand was specifically designed to be a de-centralized program and therefore quite opposite in structure from the WPA. All CETA funds were handed down from the federal government to prime sponsors, the top level of government in various states, counties, and cities with populations greater than 100,000. It was the responsibility of the prime sponsor to choose what programs would be supported with CETA funding. With the exception of a few national programs that the federal government managed (none of which were arts or culture related), all decisions, management and oversight for CETA projects was handled by the local prime sponsors. Qualifying projects were managed and housed under both public and governmental agencies and non-profit arts and community based organizations in localities. Regardless of whether or not the project was run by a government agency or a non-profit organization the workers were placed on the prime sponsor's payroll. The prime sponsors held the authority to make the hiring decisions; although the agency or organization that the project was housed under was sometimes permitted to have input in the hiring process, this varied from prime sponsor to prime sponsor. As a result, the prime sponsors were responsible for all oversight of the projects and to evaluate the use of funds. However, if the federal government did learn of improper or inappropriate use of funds they did have the authority to tell the prime sponsor to end that project or activity, but this was very rare, especially for the arts projects.

Due to the fact that CETA was locally administered, it allowed for more broadly conceived notions of what was and was not appropriate work to be funded by the government. The art that was created by CETA sponsored projects and artists often done so to appeal to the local tastes. Additionally, there was immediacy between the administration of the qualifying program and the prime sponsor, which actually allowed

for more oversight of the work as it was in process. This frequently allowed for prime sponsors to identify problematic projects in the development stages so that alterations and changes could be made before it was too late. Prime sponsors under CETA were able to use more subtle and systematic levels of control to monitor the activities of qualifying projects and direct their work and make modifications when needed (Dubin 1987).

ARRA was in some ways a hybrid of the WPA and CETA as far as the centralization of the program is concerned. Sixty percent of the funds that went to arts organizations came directly through the federal government via the NEA, while the remaining 40% were controlled by state and local arts agencies and regional arts organizations. That 40% was then re-granted to arts organizations in the state, local, and regional agencies' jurisdiction. All workers whose salaries were supported with ARRA funding remained employees or contractors of the organization and were paid by the organization, unlike the other two programs in which the workers became employees and were paid by some level of government. As ARRA was designed to support particular positions within an organization, the organization then had the authority to place any person into that position regardless of their level of need. As a result, the arts organizations themselves were then directly responsible for managing the work of the supported employees.

The decision regarding exactly what projects or positions would be supported was essentially made by both the organization and the granting agency. Arts organizations were required to specifically state what jobs would be supported through the grant and why this position was important to continuing the mission of the organization in their grant application. The granting agency then made the ultimate choice on which organization would receive support. If an organization was chosen as a

grant recipient it was contractually bound to only use the funding to support the salary of the particular positions included in the grant application. Regardless of which granting agency provided the organization with the grant, organizations were required to report back to the federal government quarterly for the duration of the grant period on their use of funds. Additionally, many of the other non-federal granting agencies also required the recipients to report back to them as well as the federal government. The reporting requirement then allowed the federal government to have oversight on all grant recipients. If an organization was discovered to be using the grant money improperly they were at risk of having their funding revoked by the granting agency, at which point it would be returned to the federal government.

The structure of all three programs was also influenced by the way in which the arts received their funding. All three of the programs depending on appropriations from Congress, but the way in which they received them was rather different. The WPA was so centralized in the federal government that all projects, both arts- and non-arts related alike, made direct requests for funding to President Roosevelt. He then, in turn, made a recommendation to Congress. Appropriations for the WPA were made intermittently, usually for three to six month period. Under CETA, the individual prime sponsors would work request funding from the Secretary of Labor usually on an annual basis for the duration of the program. Each prime sponsor could use their discretion on what portion of those funds would go towards the arts. On the other hand, ARRA awarded the NEA a one-time-only direct appropriation.

**DEFINING ARTS, ARTISTS, AND ELIGIBILITY:** When developing the legislation, policy makers will need to clearly define what is meant by the “arts;” more specifically what types of workers or organizations would be eligible. It would also need

to be decided whether or not the program would support individual artists that may or may not be associated with a particular organization, program, or agency, if funds would go to arts organizations, or a combination of both.

None of the legislation for the three programs studied took on the responsibility of defining the word “art.” The WPA was broken down into the five discipline specific projects; it was essentially up to the directors of each project to decide what fell within their jurisdiction. Because the arts were not even mentioned in the legislation for CETA, there was clearly no definition on which prime sponsors could base their decisions, and even the definition of “public service” was somewhat subjective as well. Since ARRA’s funding provided salary support for a position that was critical to supporting the organization’s artistic mission it also did not need to define the arts specifically, but rather what constitutes an arts organization. This definition was not included in ARRA legislation but is stipulated in National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965.

Each of the three programs took different approaches in determining what kinds of workers were eligible for support. The WPA funded individuals exclusively. For particular disciplines such as the Music Project, the Theater Project, and the Dance Project where artists frequently worked in ensembles it created project units that resembled other non- and for-profit arts organizations. Federal One created many symphonies, touring companies, and groups that became non-profit arts organizations when the WPA ended; many of them exist to this day. Unfortunately, these ensembles and professional level productions were often in direct competition with unsubsidized non-profit and for profit arts organizations and companies. Since the WPA the total number of non-profit arts organizations has grown exponentially. Creating new



government-run or sponsored programs and ensembles would only increase the completion with existing arts and cultural non-profit organizations. It is important to note again that the WPA was prior to the existence of the NEA and at that time it was extremely rare for an arts organization to receive any support from the federal government.

CETA funded individuals, all of whom were connected to a particular project or program within a government agency or non-profit organization. Funding for ARRA went exclusively to non-profit arts organizations to support the salary and wages of various employees and contract workers; individuals alone were not eligible to apply for funding.

If at least a portion of the funds were in a future program to be given to arts organizations, legislators would need to decide if only artists (meaning those directly involved in the creation, production, or presentation of art) would be supported, or if administrative workers such as fundraising, marketing, or managerial staff could also benefit. All three programs allowed for both types of workers to be supported. However, due to different circumstances there are indications that the WPA and CETA tended to support more artists and creative workers that ARRA may have supported a greater of a mix of artists and administrative personnel.

Related to defining what types of workers would be eligible for support, legislators must also consider whether or not the program would support only individuals who were either under- or unemployed by creating new opportunities if it would support existing jobs that were threatened in some way. In the past, all three programs supported workers of varying levels of need. The WPA Federal One Arts Projects only provided assistance for unemployed workers that met very specific criteria

to be included on relief rolls with the United States Employment Services. CETA provided assistance for workers who were both under- and unemployed for a specific amount of time. ARRA supported positions that were either recently eliminated or jeopardized existing ones.

Many of the CETA-arts projects were permitted by their prime sponsor to take talent and skill into consideration when hiring. This allowed for them to pick from the qualified workers and select the artists that best suited the needs and goals of each project. The programs of Federal One essentially had no choice but to hire everyone on the relief rosters that claimed to be an artist, regardless of their talent level. The various projects in each locality were based upon the available talent, rather than seeking out the talent to fit a particular project as CETA was permitted to do. However, they were permitted to hire a maximum of 25% non-relief workers for their skills in areas that lacked adequate talent to produce quality work. Additionally, an artist who proved to have minimal talent could be transferred to a different non-Federal One WPA project, if there was an opening. In the future, legislators should also determine whether or not artistic talent would be a qualifier for an individual to receive support.

ARRA was quite different from the other two programs in that the focus was less on the person and their eligibility requirements and more on the organization and its needs. Funding from ARRA was to support positions within organizations that were either already eliminated, at risk of being eliminated, or positions whose salary was significantly reduced. During ARRA, organizations also had the opportunity to create new positions, but this was not the primary focus of the program. As mentioned before, the individual organizations then had the autonomy to hire whomever they would like to fill these positions regardless of that individual's personal needs.

**LIMITATIONS ON WAGES:** Based upon how the overall program is structured, policy makers would also need to determine if limitations would be set on wages. Since the WPA and CETA were both direct job support programs, in which workers were placed on the government's payroll, there were clear minimums and maximums for wages.

WPA employees were all assigned one of four classifications: professional or technical, skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled. Their classification, the kind of work they were engaged, and their geographic region would dictate their salary. In most cases, workers were expected to put in at least ninety hours of work per month. Additionally, once hired most artists were required to work during specific hours and given a certain allotment of time in which a work of art must be completed. For many other types of workers setting deadlines or giving time constraints was not a difficult request but it often conflicted with the creative process.

By law the WPA and the federal government was required to cover the salaries of all relief workers and no additional subsidizes were permitted. There was a slight exception to this rule for the small percentage of workers on the Federal One Arts Projects that did not qualify for relief. Funding for these salaries could come from co-operating sponsors, if a project unit had one, or from the admission revenue of the Federal Theatre and Music projects. Under the WPA, if an employee had even been as much as offered a job somewhere in the private sector they were required to quit the WPA and take the other position. Additionally, if it were discovered that an employee received any additional income either in the form of investments, aid from family or friends, or practically any other source there were frequently considered ineligible for support.

Wages under CETA were fixed, but it was up to each prime sponsor to decide what that limit would be. The main stipulation on the wage level was that it had to be set a prevailing and livable level for the location and was not to exceed \$10,000 (\$45,000 when adjusted for inflation) annually (Bureau of Labor Statistics). CETA followed many of the same rules as the WPA, however not nearly as strictly. In fact, in the early days of CETA, a worker's total household income was not taken into consideration for eligibility and many workers were supported who may have otherwise been able to thrive. Later on the eligibility requirements became more stringent. Regardless, if a worker was offered an unsubsidized position they were encouraged to take it, but they were not forced to do so. It was also acceptable for workers to have additional sources of income. However, the agency or organization that the employee worked for was not permitted to supplement their wages in any way and all funding for a CETA employee was only to be funded through federal funds received by the prime sponsor.

ARRA was quite different from the other two programs. Again, there were no eligibility requirements for the individual whose salary was supported. Therefore, the person who filled an ARRA grant funded position could have a second job, have income off of investments, or have family and friends who were willing to help provide financial support. Additionally, the organizations that received the grants were permitted to supplement the salary or wage for the funded positions through other means as well. Essentially, 100% of the ARRA funds had to go towards the proscribed positions; those funds did not have to make up 100% of the salary of those positions.

**SUPPORT FOR SUPPLIES:** In addition to making decisions regarding limitations on wages, legislators must also decide if funding would be available for

supplies and facilities. In order to create and produce art, painters must have canvases and paints, musicians must have instruments and sheet music, sculptors need clay and metal, and dancers need rehearsal space and costumes. Additionally, if funding is supporting wages for administrators it might be worth considering if funds could go towards supplies and other things that they might need. For example, if an organization received support for its marketing director would it also be permitted to use funds to print and send out postcards or purchase a large poster for a bus shelter?

While the WPA's focus was on providing work for artists, administrators recognized that additional funding was needed in order for them to actually produce anything. As a result, the WPA provided money for supplies, materials, and space for artists to create, develop ideas, perform, and present their artwork. CETA and ARRA, on the other hand, did not allow for funding to go towards anything except salary support. This meant in order for workers to do the work they were hired to do, the program was required to find money to purchase supplies and other supporting equipment elsewhere. For most of its grant programs, the NEA requires organizations to secure matching funds, but for ARRA grants this requirement was waved. This has become a common trend in philanthropy in recent years and might be worth considering if matching funds should be a requirement of any future programs.

Though there does not appear to be any evidence to support this claim, it does seem likely that for both of the two more recent programs there may have been projects or organizations that either did not compete for funding or were denied support because they were not able to secure the money necessary to purchase the materials needed to actually put artists or administrators to work. If funds could have been spent for these types of items there is a possibility that more projects and workers

would have benefited from these two programs. However, the opposite side of this argument would be that making funds available for supplies has the potential to reduce the amount available to salaries and then either reduce the wages or number of people who would benefit.

**DURATION OF SUPPORT:** One of the final points to consider that would need to be considered is the length of time the program would be in effect and how long workers would be eligible to receive assistance. Again, all three programs had different approaches to providing relief for artists and arts organizations and each one was created in during times of varying degrees of economic hardship.

From the onset, the WPA as a whole, and more specifically the Federal One Arts Projects, was intended to last indefinitely or at least until the economy improved and the private sector was better capable of supporting the workforce. However, there was no knowing when that day might come and therefore no time limits were set in place. In 1939, three years before the WPA was canceled, the Federal Theatre Project and the Federal Writers Projects were terminated and the remaining projects were transitioned into state run operations. The choice to make these changes was based on changing political ideology and allegations of communist activities among those receiving relief. Additionally, there was no time limit for how long an individual could be employed through the WPA and there were probably several workers, artists and non-artists alike, who may have worked on a WPA project from the beginning of the program until its end.

CETA as a whole, much like the WPA, was intended to also last indefinitely, or at least until conditions improved. However, the individual public service projects and

workers that were funded through Titles II and VI, as were the majority of the arts related projects, faced very specific time limits for how long they could be supported. Workers were only eligible to receive assistance from CETA for one year and many of the projects were designed to only last for that one year. Projects or prime sponsors who were discovered to be supporting workers longer than one year were subject to consequences. CETA was phased out in 1981 as a result of a changing political climate that no longer favored direct job support programs.

There was also not any specific time frame given to ARRA legislation as a whole; this is partially due to the fact that it was not entirely a job support program but also included tax cuts and benefits and changes to entitlement programs. All of the grants, contracts, and loans, constituting the bulk of the job supporting efforts were structured differently; some had time limits and others did not. The majority of those programs or projects that did have time limits were self-imposed by the agency that received the contract or loan or administered the grants; this was the case for the grants that came through the NEA. The grant program using the ARRA funds was intended to limit support to approximately one year. However, some organizations used the funds faster and some used them more slowly. The last of the grants was disbursed in 2010, and as of June, 2012 there was still at least one organization that was using a part of the funding to support one or more jobs.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> At the end of the second quarter of 2012, there was a 0.61 FTE jobs reported to Recovery.gov under the National Endowment for the Arts' allocation.

## CONCLUSION

The Federal One Arts Projects of the Works Progress Administration, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act of 1973, and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 did prove to be very different federal job support programs. Collectively, these three programs supported nearly 300,000 arts and cultural workers in three different decades and economic crises. Each one had a unique approach to providing work for struggling artists. Much can be learned from the way in which these programs were structured. Based upon the findings from researching the WPA, CETA, and ARRA, should America find itself in need of another job support program that would provide assistance for the arts, legislators should ensure that arts and the structure of its support are included in the legislation and that they require records to be kept on the use of funds and the number of workers supported. Additionally, policy makers should consider the structure of each of the previous programs when designing new legislation. They will need to make decisions on how the arts will be defined, what kinds of workers or organizations would be eligible for support, if there will be limitations set on a supported workers' salary or wage, if funds would be permitted to go towards supplies in order to create art, and, finally, how long workers and organizations would be allowed to receive assistance. While looking to the future, policy makers may also want to look at the long term effects of these past programs and how workers were able to support themselves after the program ended. There may also be other models used in other industries or in previous job support programs that did not provide assistance for the arts that could be adapted for the arts.



Hopefully, as America continues to recover from the most recent recession it will find itself in a long period of prosperity. However, if the economy was to falter again and federal legislators were to enact a new job support program it should provide assistance for the arts industry. Policymakers should feel confident in learning from the lessons and examples set forth in previous policies to continue to grow and strengthen the arts in America. As different as all three of these program were, there were two common but contradictory threads between them all: supporters of the programs believed that all artists and cultural workers are just as worthy as any other worker of support; and those who criticized the program often argued that supporting the arts, and thus artists, was frivolous in a time of need. As American politics and society continue to evolve hopefully more and more people will begin to agree that artists deserve the opportunity to be provided with a livable wage so they can continue to contribute to the cultural heritage that makes this country so great.

**TABLE I**

**Requested Allocation for the Federal One Arts Projects For an Eight-Month  
Period Starting June 1938 (Source: McDonald 1969)**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Man-Year Cost</b>	<b>Man-Month Cost<sup>12</sup></b>	<b>Requested Amount</b>
<b>Federal Art Project</b>	4,900	\$1,225	\$102	\$4,001,667
<b>Federal Music Project</b>	11,500	\$1,135	\$95	\$8,701,667
<b>Federal Theatre Project</b>	10,500	\$1,248	\$104	\$8,736,000
<b>Federal Writers Project</b>	4,600	\$1,135	\$95	\$3,480,667
<b>Historical Records Survey</b>	8,100	\$943	\$78	\$5,092,200
<b>Total for Federal One</b>	39,600	\$1,137	\$95	\$30,012,201

---

<sup>12</sup> Man-month costs were not part of the original chart as presented by McDonald in his text. This column was added by the author in order to show the man-month cost and to keep consistent with the way in which wages were presented in the preceding text.

**TABLE II**

<b>Comparative Program Information</b>			
	<b>WPA</b>	<b>CETA<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>ARRA</b>
<b>Years in Effect</b>	1935 – 1942	1972 – 1981	2009 – present
<b>Years Supporting the Arts</b>	1935 – 1939	1974 – 1981	2009 – 2010
<b>No. of Arts Jobs Supported</b>	200,000	10,000	5,143
<b>No. of Arts Jobs Supported Annually<sup>14</sup></b>	50,000	1,430	2,570
<b>Total No. of Jobs Supported</b>	3,000,000	U/K <sup>15</sup>	5,960,000
<b>Percent of All Jobs</b>	7%	U/K	0.008%
<b>Unemployment Rate<sup>16</sup></b>	20.7%	5.0%	8.3%
<b>Arts Budget</b>	\$160,000,000	\$200,000,000	\$50,000,000
<b>Cost per Arts Job</b>	\$1,135	\$20,000	\$9,700
<b>Arts Budget (adjusted for inflation)</b>	\$2,651,844,592	\$506,884,480	\$53,692,135
<b>Total Program Budget</b>	\$11 Billion	U/K	\$840 Billion
<b>Total Budget (adjusted for inflation)</b>	\$155 Trillion	U/K	\$840 Billion
<b>Percent of Budget</b>	1.5%	U/K	0.0006%

<sup>13</sup> As noted before, all numbers that are available for CETA are estimates and there are no solid numbers readily available to researchers. To date, no conclusive figures for the total number of jobs supported through CETA outside of just the arts projects nor the total budget have been located.

<sup>14</sup> These figures are approximate based on the total number of jobs in the arts supported and the number of years each program supported the arts

<sup>15</sup> U/K: Unknown due to a lack of records for CETA.

<sup>16</sup> This is the unemployment rate when the legislation went into effect. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

**TABLE III**

<b>Program Structural Details</b>			
	<b>WPA</b>	<b>CETA</b>	<b>ARRA</b>
<b>Arts included in legislation</b>	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Arts funded through</b>	Federal government directly	Block grants to State & Local Government (Prime Sponsors)	Grants from NEA and re-granting agencies
<b>Authority for project decisions</b>	Federal One Administration	Prime Sponsors	Arts NPOs/Granting agency
<b>Authority for hiring</b>	Federal One Administration	Prime Sponsors	Non-profit Arts Organizations
<b>Employees managed by</b>	Federal Government	Prime Sponsors	Non-profit arts organizations
<b>Government Oversight</b>	Federal	State & Local	Federal, State, and/or Local
<b>Reporting Required</b>	No	No	Yes
<b>Relief for</b>	Unemployed only	Under- & Unemployed	Existing, at-risk and new jobs
<b>Length of aid to workers</b>	Indefinitely	One year	One Year
<b>Limitations on wages</b>	Yes	Yes	No
<b>Money available for supplies</b>	Yes	No	No
<b>Legislation starting point</b>	President (Executive Order)	Congress to President	President to Congress

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

----. 2009. Stim package includes \$50 million for the arts. *Stage Directions*.

American Alliance of Museums, "The Couburn Amendment: an Explanation and Timeline," <http://www.speakupformuseums.org/docs/Coburn%20Amendment.df>

Barnes, Peter. 1975; 1975. Bringing Back the WPA. *The New Republic*, MAR. 15, 1975; sec 172.

Bureau of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator, <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl?cost1=10%2C000%2C000.00&year1=1977&year2=2012>

Buttitta, Tony and Witham, Barry. 1982. *Uncle Sam Presents: A Memoir of the Federal Theatre 1935-1939*. The University of Pennsylvania Press.

Cooper, Elizabeth. 2004. "Dances About Spain: Censorship at the Federal Theatre Project." Pp. 232-246 in *International Federation for Theatre Research*, vol. 20, no. 3.

Department of Labor. 1975. "Comprehensive Employment and Training Act: Review and Oversight."

Department of Labor. 1977. "Overview of the Nixon-Ford Administration at the Department of Labor, 1969-1977."

Department of Labor. 1978. "The Partnership of CETA and the Arts: Six Reprints from Worklife Magazine" (See page 4 for more detail)

Dubin, Stephen C. 1987. *Bureaucratizing the Muse: Public Funds and the Cultural Worker*. The University of Chicago Press.

Grabell, Michael. 2012. *Money Well Spent?: The Truth Behind the Trillion-Dollar Stimulus, the Biggest Economic Recovery Plan in History*. PublicAffairs.

Grunwald, Michael. 2012. *The New New Deal: The Hidden Story of Change in the Obama Era*. Simon & Schuster.

Jones, Patricia C. 2012. "State of the Arts," *Arts Digest 2012*. The Municipal Arts Society of New York.

Levy, Alan Howard. 1997. *Government and the Arts: Debates over Federal Support of the Arts in America from George Washington to Jesse Helms*. University Press of America.

Los Angeles County Arts Commission, "Stimulus Funds to Preserve Jobs in the Arts in Los Angeles Awarded to 16 Arts Organizations,"

<http://www.lacountyarts.org/UserFiles/File/publications-and-announcements/ARRA%20Press%20Release%20FINAL.pdf>

McDonald, William F. 1969. *Federal Relief Administration and the Arts*. Ohio State University Press.

McKinzie, Richard D. 1973. *The New Deal for Artists*. Princeton University Press.

Meltzer, Milton. 1976. *Violins & Shovels: The WPA Arts Projects*. Delacorte Press.

Mankin, Laurence D. 1995. "Federal Arts Patronage in the New Deal." Pp. 77-94  
*America's Commitment to Culture: Government and the Arts*. Ed. Kevin M. Mulcahy and Margaret Jane Wyszomirski. Westview Press.

Nance, Kevin. 2009. Summer stimulus. *Poets & Writers*.

National Endowment for the Arts. 2012. <http://www.arts.gov>.

National Endowment for the Arts. 2009a. "The Arts & The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009: Grant Program Description,"  
<http://www.arts.gov/grants/apply/recovery/index.html>

National Endowment for the Arts. 2009b. "The Arts & The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009: How to Prepare and Submit an Application,"  
<http://www.arts.gov/grants/apply/recovery/how.html>

O'Leary, Christopher J. and Eberts, Randall W. 2009. "Employment and Training Policy in the United States during the Economic Crisis." Upjohn Institute Working Paper No. 10-161

PolitiFact.com, "Does the stimulus package really include \$300,000 for a sculpture garden?,"  
<http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2009/jan/26/eric-cantor/does-stimulus-package-really-include-300000-sculpt/>

Recovery and Transparency Board. <http://www.recovery.gov>

Riojas, Mirasol. 2006. "The Accidental Arts Supporter: an Assessment of the Comprehensive Employment And Training Act (CETA)." University of California at Los Angeles – Chicano Studies Research Center.

U.S. Congress. House. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. H.R. 1. 111<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess. (January 6, 2009). <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-111hr1enr/pdf/BILLS-111hr1enr.pdf>



Williams, Rory. 2009. Fed funds might help bail out the arts. *Strings*

Wilson, Daniel J. 2011. "Fiscal Spending Jobs Multipliers: Evidence from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act." Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco Working Papers Series.

Quinn, Susan. 2008. *Furious Improvisation: How the WPA and a Cast of Thousands Made High Art out of Desperate Times*. Walker and Company.

Zeigler, Joseph Wesley. 1994. *Arts in Crisis: The National Endowment of the Arts versus America*. Chicago Review Press

## INDEX

- Artists-in-Residence Program, Chicago  
(AIR) *vii*, 37, 38, 39
- Alsberg, Henry, 10
- Americans for the Arts, 49, 56
- Baker, Jacob, 10
- Cahill, Holger, 10, 24
- Cantor, Eric, 48
- Chicago Council on Fine Arts, 37
- Civil Works Administration (CWA), *vii*, 6, 7
- Coburn, Tom, 48, 55, 84
- Culture Wars, 55
- Dies, Martin, 26
- Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 (ERA), *vii*, 4, 13
- Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), *vii*, 6, 7, 8, 9
- Federal One Arts Projects (Federal One), *vi*, 1, 4, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 60, 62, 63, 67, 71, 72, 73, 74, 77, 79, 81, 83
- Federal Art Project, *vii*, 4, 10, 24, 81
- Federal Music Project, 4, 10, 20, 23, 24, 71, 81
- Federal Theatre Project, 4, 10, 13, 24, 26, 27, 77, 81
- Federal Writers Project, 4, 10, 11, 25, 81
- Flanagan, Hallie, 10, 26
- Ford, Gerald, 29, 30
- Harrington, Francis, 26
- Historical Records Survey, 4, 10, 81
- Hopkins  
Harry Hopkins, 8, 10, 26
- House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), *vii*, 26
- Index of American Design, 24
- Inouye, Daniel, 48
- Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 (JTPA), 44
- National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), *vii*, 1, 36, 50, 51, 52, 53, 78, 86, 87
- Nixon, Richard, 28, 29, 30, 85
- Obama, Barack, 46, 47, 49, 85
- Obey, David, 47, 49
- Pelosi, Nancy, 49
- Performing Arts Alliance, 49
- Public Works Administration (PWA), 9, 12
- Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), *vii*, 7, 9
- Roosevelt, Franklin, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 17, 25, 27, 70
- San Francisco Art Commission, 34, 35, 36
- Sokoloff, Nicoli 10
- United States Employment Service (USES), *vii*, 12, 13, 14
- Woodrum, Clifton 26